THE GENDER EQUALITY SPECIAL

# Fabian Review

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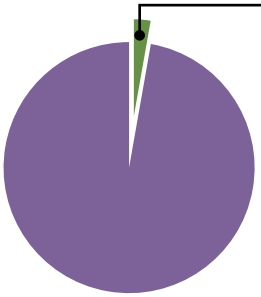
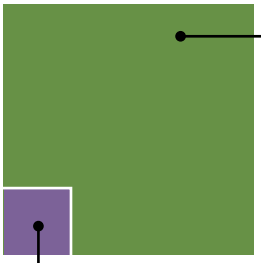
Spring 2011



3%
OF MEN IN THE UK'S CHILDCARE WORKFORCE



4719
NUMBER OF MEN ELECTED TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS SINCE 1918

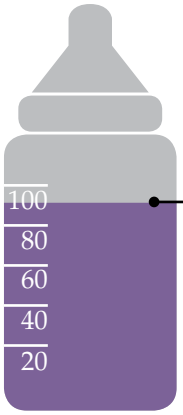
355
NUMBER OF WOMEN ELECTED TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS SINCE 1918

NUMBER OF CONSTITUENCIES IN 2010 WHERE ALL THREE MAJOR PARTY CANDIDATES WERE MEN/WOMEN

267
11

# STILL UNEQUAL

## Why the left is putting women front and centre




90%
PROPORTION OF SINGLE PARENTS WHO ARE WOMEN, THE GROUP WORST AFFECTED BY CUTS

14%
OF LOCAL AUTHORITY LEADERS ARE WOMEN

86%
OF LOCAL AUTHORITY LEADERS ARE MEN

£4.20
AMOUNT MEN STAND TO LOSE A WEEK AFTER THE CUTS

£8.80
AMOUNT WOMEN STAND TO LOSE A WEEK AFTER THE CUTS

PERCENTAGE OF MPS THAT ARE MEN/WOMEN

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 68 | 32 | *Labour* |
| 84 | 16 | *Conservative* |
| 88 | 12 | *Lib Dem* |

The quarterly magazine of the Fabian Society Volume 123 no 1 £4.95

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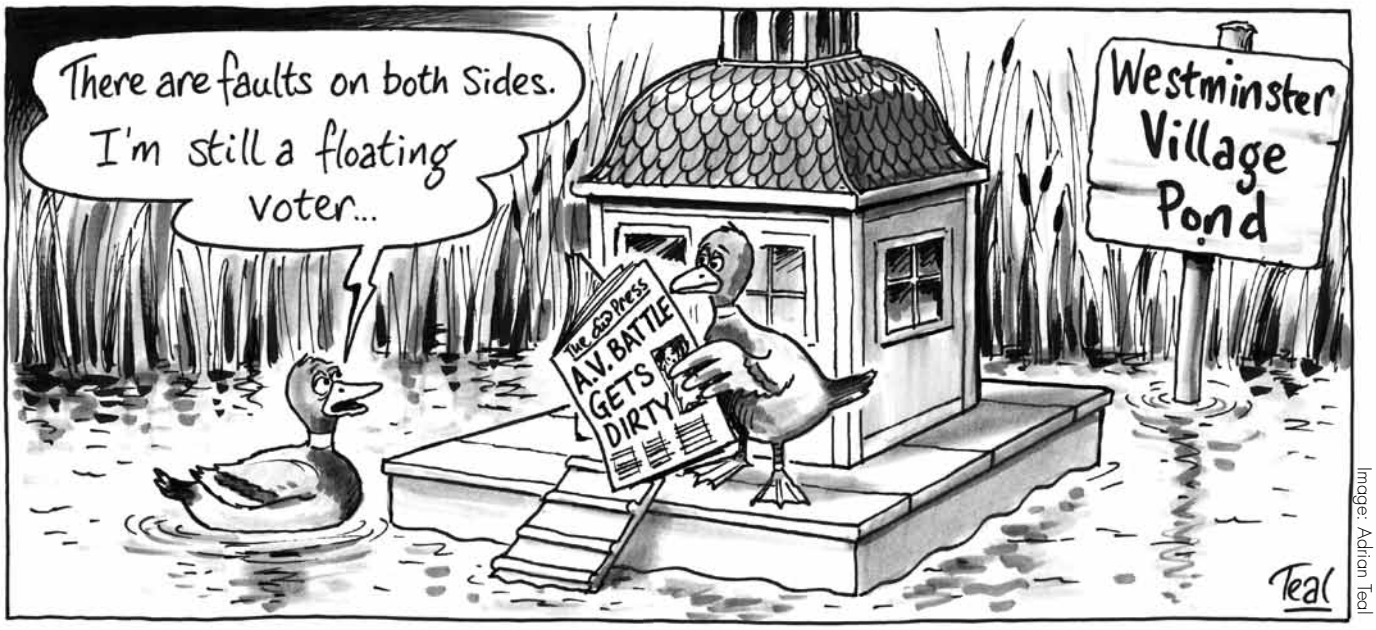



Image: Adrian Teal

# Democracy Day

As both sides in the referendum battle voter apathy, the Yes campaign have won the arguments if not yet the votes.

What if they threw a referendum and nobody came? Our first national plebiscite for 35 years has hardly set the country alight.

Labour voters will probably decide the referendum, though many may not vote on the issues. It is impossible to vote against the coalition Government: a No vote cast to spite Nick Clegg will also bolster David Cameron and George Osborne.

The Yes campaign makes too simple a contrast between 'democracy or duck houses', stretching a tenuous link from safe seats to MP expenses. But the No campaign has focused primarily on false claims, making a blatant lie – that changing the voting system will cost £250 million – its central public argument, after its polling showed this could shift inattentive voters.

There is a particular chutzpah in a No campaign led by Matthew Elliott, the head of The Taxpayers' Alliance, which hates public spending and campaigns with passion for deeper cuts, running emotive but irrelevant posters calling for more spending on premature baby units. Surely even they can't believe it.

There will be no expensive voting machines. None are planned, nobody wants them, and Australia counts Alternative Vote (AV) votes by hand. But Yes campaigners should do more than factual rebuttal – and invite those campaigning against this (fictional) waste of money to join them in a bipartisan promise to legislate that General Election votes shall be counted by hand, whether we keep the system or change it. There would be an overwhelming Commons majority to defuse the threat. Refusing such an olive branch would be to openly admit that the bogus campaign is a dirty trick.

An honest account of the choice would acknowledge several similarities between first-past-the-post and the Alternative Vote. AV would retain a parliament in which every MP represents a single constituency, but must now seek 50 per cent. Both are majoritarian systems, which will tend to deliver a majority to a single party which receives 40 per cent of the vote, while both will deliver hung Parliaments in conditions like those of May 2010.

I will vote Yes as the differences seem clearly in AV's favour. X voting was fine in 1955 when there were, on average, 2.2 candidates per constituency. This rose to over 6 by 2010. Every voter can cast a real first choice vote under AV. Fifteen per cent of voters say they don't vote for the candidate or party they want at present. This is particularly important to reversing a Labour retreat in the southern regions, and would help to mitigate the sharp regional polarisation of British politics.

There is no cast iron evidence about partisan effects. Voters and parties would act differently under a new system. AV is good for broadly popular parties, and bad for pariah parties.

Labour would have done better under AV in recent elections, but badly in 1983. The Conservatives are increasingly panicked about a Yes vote, telling Tory donors to fund the No campaign or risk having to fund a much more difficult re-election campaign if the system changes.

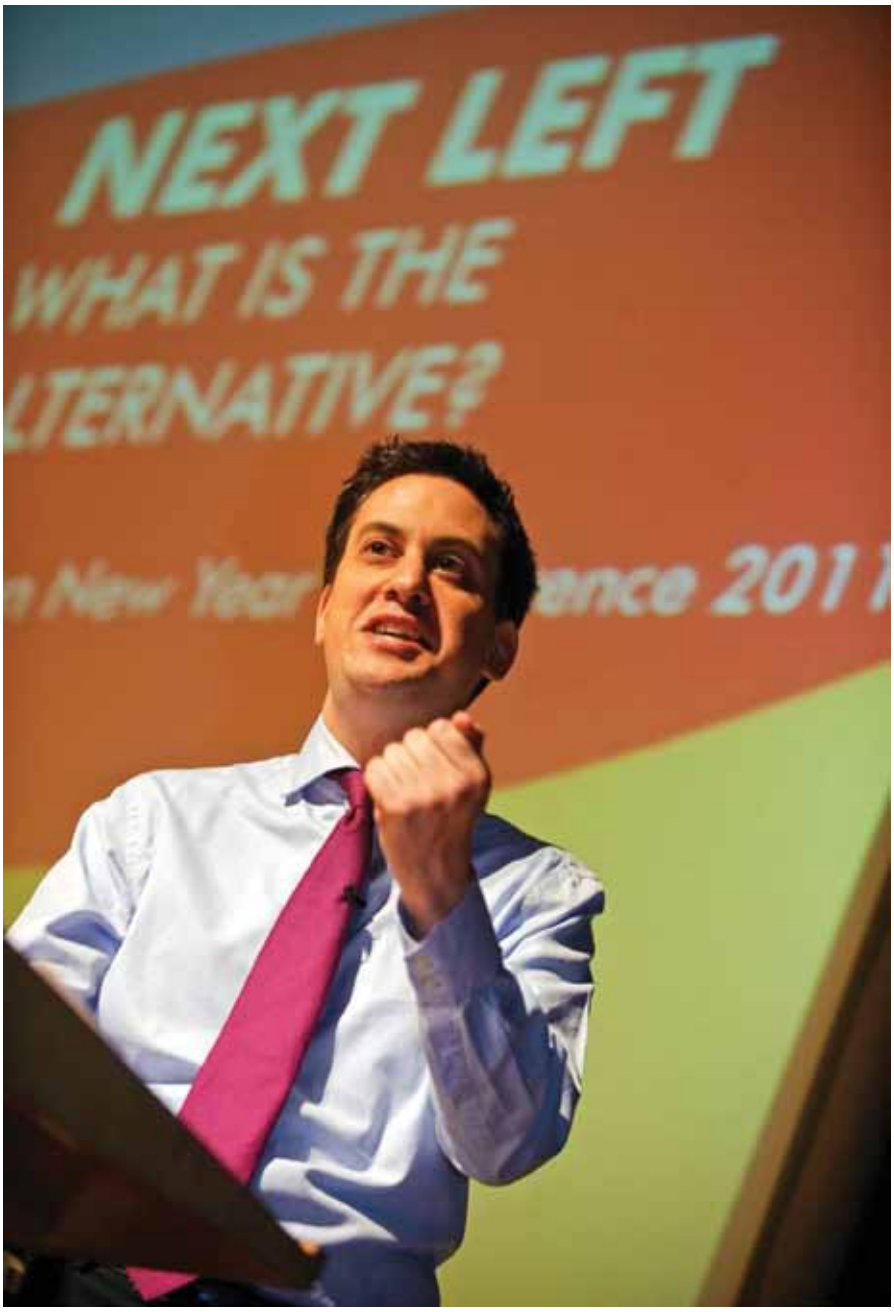
AV would make securing a majority for 'no compromise' Conservatism harder, requiring a broader appeal beyond the Tory tribe than David Cameron has yet achieved. But no electoral system would or should ever permanently exclude a major political tradition from power. Tories feared universal suffrage would kill them too, but conservatives manage to live with changes they opposed.

Fabians will make up their own minds on both sides of the argument. Do vote – and for the system you believe would be better for our democracy.

*SK*

The Fabian New Year Conference back at the end of January was Ed Miliband's first big speech of 2011. The new Labour leader spoke after the by-election success in Oldham and Saddleworth and delivered an optimistic call to action. He outlined the scale of the challenge faced by Labour but was clear that "there is a progressive majority in Britain". He said "the decision of the Liberal Democrats to join a Conservative-led Government was a tragic mistake … [but] I am certainly pleased that many Liberal Democrats now see Labour as the main progressive hope in British politics." Echoing the *Fabian Review*'s cover claim that this year was "His Test and Ours", Miliband said: "you've got to do your bit and I'll do mine; that's the way we can build a platform for what you want, for what I want – to win the next election." Elsewhere at the conference Douglas Alexander clashed with Lib Dem deputy leader Simon Hughes on how progressive voices could influence the coalition and the long-term shape of the centre-left.

Europe has been very much on the Fabian radar in recent months. Shirley Williams led a diverse range of speakers – including UKIP MEP Derek Clark, Labour's shadow Europe minister Wayne David MP and Tory Eurosceptic Mark Reckless MP – at a one-day Fabian conference called 'Britain & Europe: In, out or somewhere in between?'. In addition, Ed Miliband's policy chief Stewart Wood led a launch seminar for the recent Fabian and FEPS pamphlet *Europe's Left in the Crisis: How the next left can respond*. Reported by the *Daily Telegraph* as "the most accurate reflection going of where Labour is heading", the seminar discussed exclusive YouGov polling conducted for the pamphlet which revealed that behind a general anti-Brussels sentiment, there also lies a desire for greater co-operation between EU member states in core policy areas.




© Andrew Wiard

Recent Fabian chair Sadiq Khan MP launched Labour's criminal justice policy review in a Fabian lecture. In his first major speech as shadow justice secretary, Khan praised the achievements of the last Labour Government in reducing violent crime and said the party should now support reducing the prison population. Khan wrote in the *Guardian* that "focusing on these issues is not about being soft on crime – it is about being effective in reducing it. This will be the test we put to the Government: are its policies cutting crime? We fear it will fail the test, because its focus is on cutting costs, not crime." The following Q&A session included responses from Juliet Lyon (Director, Prison Reform Trust) and Matthew Ryder QC (Matrix Chambers).

Fabian General Secretary Sunder Katwala has been long-listed for The Orwell Prize in the political blogging category, for pieces published on the Fabian blog Next Left, as well as at the New Statesman and Left Foot Forward. The Orwell Prize website includes ten posts from each of the 22 long-listed bloggers, chosen from 220 entries for the prize, and so offers a good chance to discover some new online writers. You can read Sunder's blog posts here: http://theorwellprize.co.uk/longlists/sunder-katwala/

**Fabian Review**

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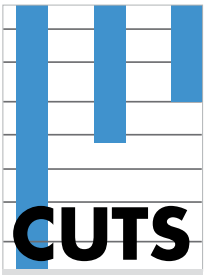
# INSIDE



## QUESTIONS WE'RE ASKING

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# How the Government has got it wrong on gender equality…

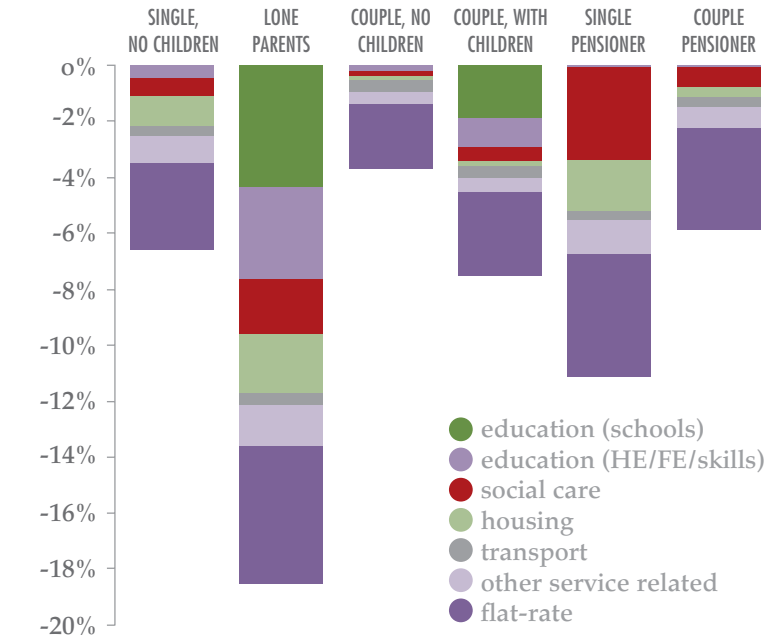
Howard Reed
is Director of
Landman Economics

While it is true that some spending cuts would have been implemented even if Labour had won last year's general election, the cuts did not have to be made in a way which disadvantaged women this much. When you compare single women with single men, it is clear that the Government's record on gender equality so far is poor and that the particular mix of fiscal consolidation measures introduced have a more adverse impact on women than men. Furthermore, the Government's failure to conduct any gender equality impact assessment of the June 2010 Budget suggests that it didn't particularly care what the gender impact of the tax and welfare measures was. It is to be hoped that the Government learns from its mistakes (and the subsequent legal challenge by the Fawcett Society) and incorporates gender analysis into policy design in subsequent budgets.

**The coalition Government's spending cuts hit some households harder than others:**

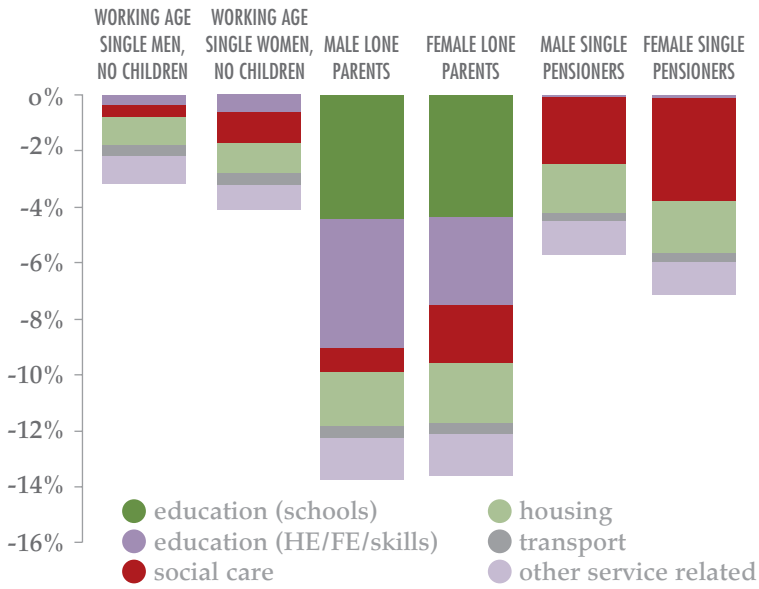
- In cash terms, single parent households are by far the worst affected by the cuts, as Figure 1 shows. There are around ten times as many female single parents as

Figure 1: losses from spending cuts up to 2014-15, as a proportion of disposable income, all households, by family type




Source: calculations based on Horton and Reed (2010)

Figure 2: losses from spending cuts up to 2014-15, as a proportion of disposable income, single adult households




Source: calculations based on Horton and Reed (2010)

there are male single parents in the UK, and hence the impact of the cuts to single parent households falls mainly on women. This is because households with children use the vast majority of publicly funded education services, which are facing cuts of around 10 per cent in real terms for school level education, and around 30 per cent for higher education, further education and adult skills funding.

- The next worst affected groups are male and female single pensioners, largely because they make much more use of social care than working age single people without children, and social care is facing particularly severe cuts over the next five years. Figure 2 shows the cuts expressed as a proportion of average disposable income for each group: women have lower average incomes and hence are worse affected by the cuts.

**Reducing the generosity of the Working Tax Credit will have a big impact on working single parents, around 90 per cent of whom are women:**

- On average, single parents claiming Working Tax Credit and using paid childcare lose over £300 per year in childcare support.
- The average reduction in tax credit payments is around £135 per year for single parents working 16 hours or more per week and claiming tax credits, around 2.5 per cent in real terms.

**The Government has argued that its tax and welfare reforms 'make work pay', but for single parents the opposite is the case.**

- For single parents claiming Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, the average cash gain from working will fall from £10,390 per year to £10,142 per year – a reduction of £248, or about 2.5 percent.
- The reduction in the incentive to work is largest for families with more than two children, families using paid childcare, and full-time workers. The increase of £1,000 in the income tax personal allowance does not generate a big enough uplift to in-work incomes to compensate for the cuts to Working Tax Credit and the increase in the rate of National Insurance Contributions.

*References*

Horton, T and Reed, H (2010) "The distributional impact of the 2010 Spending Review". Radical Statistics, Issue 103, pp 113-124.

Horton, T and Reed, H (2011) "The Impact of tax credit changes on working single parents". London: Gingerbread.

# … And how to make it better

Kitty Ussher
is the Director of Demos

We know that the Government did not consider the effect of the June 2010 Emergency Budget on women because the Fawcett Society took them to court for not publishing a gender impact assessment. That this legal action was possible was a tribute to the work of the outgoing Labour Government in getting the Equality Act onto the statute books in time. As a result, George Osborne DID have to consider the effect on women of the Comprehensive Spending Review that happened a few months later. Given that this discipline does not appear to have altered the general direction of policy, however, it seems unlikely to have been a constraining factor.

In fact, the Government's strategy for achieving the cuts was set early on. The main tax rise was VAT, the fairness of which has been hotly debated but it is certainly more regressive than, say, income or wealth taxes, almost by definition. The single largest spending cut comes from the decision to lower the rate at which benefits are automatically up-rated by each year to take account of inflation. They have simply decided to use a less generous measure of inflation when doing this, because it is cheaper. By

definition this will hit the poorest harder, extracting £6bn from the least well-off by 2014-15. It is also politically clever, by penalising those with the quietest voices in a way that they won't even notice: the absolute cash amount of these benefit payments will still rise, but people will just find that their money goes less far. Is this a gender issue? No, because men and women are equal in their receipt of benefits. ONS data shows that 16 per cent of men and 15.8 per cent of women are benefit recipients. Although frankly a deliberate attempt to cut insidiously from the poorest doesn't need a gender effect to feel wrong.

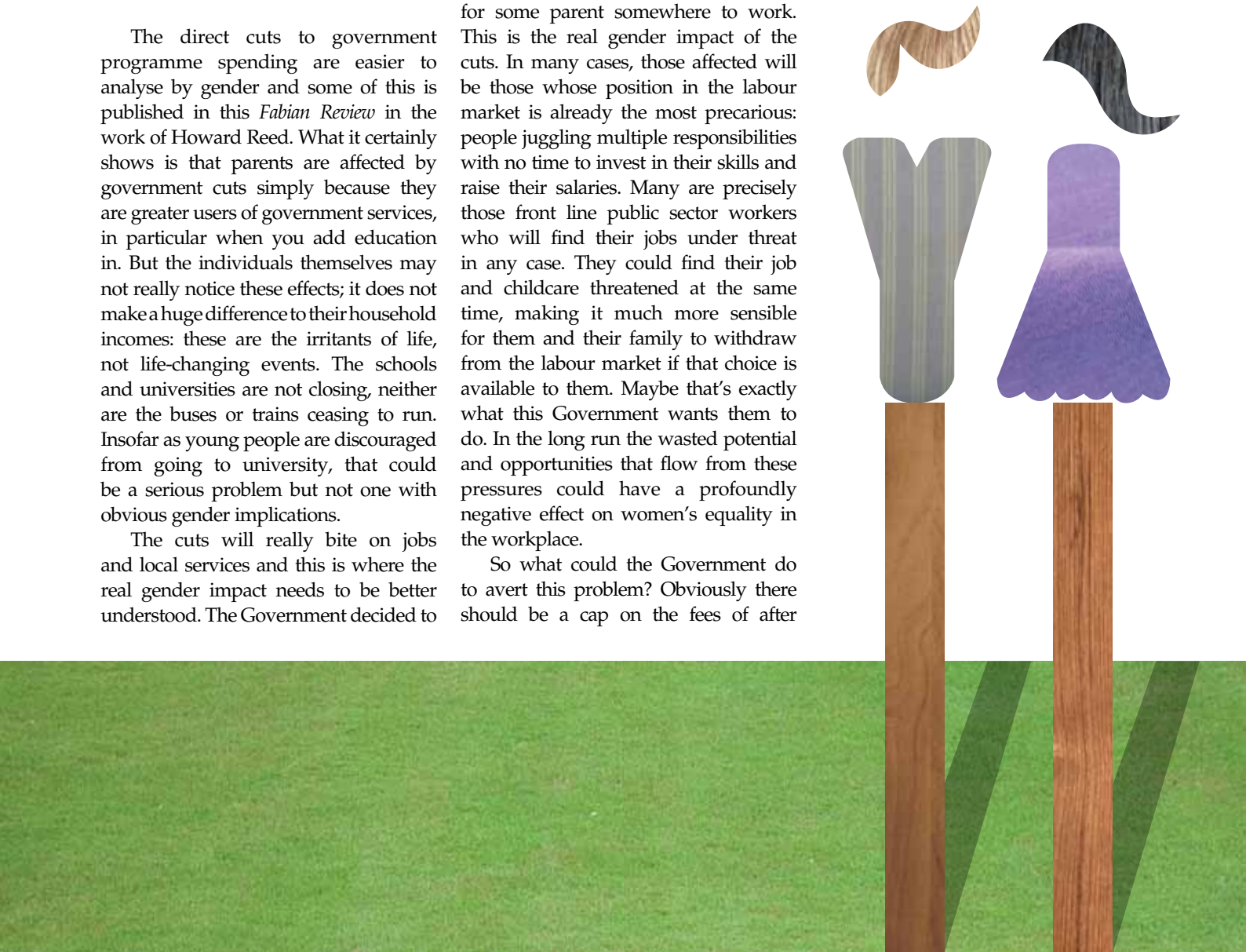
The cuts will really bite on jobs and local services and this is where the real gender impact needs to be better understood

The direct cuts to government programme spending are easier to analyse by gender and some of this is published in this *Fabian Review* in the work of Howard Reed. What it certainly shows is that parents are affected by government cuts simply because they are greater users of government services, in particular when you add education in. But the individuals themselves may not really notice these effects; it does not make a huge difference to their household incomes: these are the irritants of life, not life-changing events. The schools and universities are not closing, neither are the buses or trains ceasing to run. Insofar as young people are discouraged from going to university, that could be a serious problem but not one with obvious gender implications.

The cuts will really bite on jobs and local services and this is where the real gender impact needs to be better understood. The Government decided to push much of the difficult choices down to local government. Again, this is good politics as it removes ministers from the front line of responsibility for unpopular decisions and diffuses potential opposition throughout the country; different choices will be opposed in different ways in different places.

In total, however, these cuts to local services are potentially the most disruptive to women as they have the greatest potential to disturb the delicate local ecosystem of family support. In total around £7bn will be lost from local councils by the end of the spending round, and they are being severely incentivised not to raise council tax to compensate. Every time a youth club closes (the police told me of three closing in my area), a sports facility is withdrawn (remember free swimming for children?) or an after school club or nursery raises its fees because the council grant is slashed (just ask, it's happening) then it becomes that little bit less viable for some parent somewhere to work. This is the real gender impact of the cuts. In many cases, those affected will be those whose position in the labour market is already the most precarious: people juggling multiple responsibilities with no time to invest in their skills and raise their salaries. Many are precisely those front line public sector workers who will find their jobs under threat in any case. They could find their job and childcare threatened at the same time, making it much more sensible for them and their family to withdraw from the labour market if that choice is available to them. Maybe that's exactly what this Government wants them to do. In the long run the wasted potential and opportunities that flow from these pressures could have a profoundly negative effect on women's equality in the workplace.

So what could the Government do to avert this problem? Obviously there should be a cap on the fees of after school clubs and nurseries and any form of government-supported services for young people. Also, more time for councils to negotiate shorter and flexible hours for all their employees – men included – rather than job cuts for all the lowest skilled. And to pay for this? Perhaps counter-intuitively, I would completely scrap child benefit, rather than just tinkering around in an illogical way at the edges. It's an out-of-date and clumsy mechanism. Payments for the additional costs of having children should of course still exist but they should be properly means-tested rather than being a flat payment per child, and the savings used to increase dramatically both demand (through vouchers) and supply (through councils) of affordable childcare and youth provision. This should be a top priority. It wouldn't stop the cuts but it would do a lot to ensure that the gender impact really was mitigated. ■



# "We can't wait for history"

Andrew Winning/PA Archive/Press Association Images

Labour will be vindicated on the economy, Yvette Cooper tells **Mary Riddell**, but the damage the Government is doing to women's life chances needs to be stopped now.

Mary Riddell
is a columnist for the Daily Telegraph

Unexpectedly for such a disciplined multi-tasker, Yvette Cooper is a hoarder. Beneath the window of her Westminster office sit the heaps of old paperwork that she keeps meaning, and failing, to clear up. Still, a deep litter filing system has its uses.

Not long ago, the Shadow Home Secretary stumbled on a parliamentary question from 1999, asking for a Treasury analysis on the impact of Budget measures on both men and women. The document revealed that the analysis the coalition omitted to conduct on the effect of cuts on women was once routine. "Exactly. It could be done, and they [George Osborne's team] hadn't done it. Not because it's not possible, but because they had chosen not to."

Cooper, initially appointed to shadow William Hague on foreign affairs, also placed herself in the vanguard of Labour's domestic offensive by highlighting the unfair burden that women would have to bear as a result of the Government's deficit reduction strategy. As she has pointed out, men stood to lose £4.20 a week after the cuts began in April, while women would see an average loss of £8.80 a week, despite earning and owning less. Reductions in tax credits, benefits, pensions and attendance allowance would all hit women harder.

Osborne's March Budget did nothing to reassure Cooper, who noted that many part-time working mothers, as well as pensioners, would get nothing from the increase in tax

allowance. The coalition has now established itself, in her view, as an anti-family government. "Very much [so]. I thought initially that this was maybe just a blind spot, but it's been repeated.

"I think [there's] a confluence of two ideologies – the paternalistic Tory one which said that traditional families would be supported. The married couples' tax allowance [would] only help women who stayed at home and could end up with families with children losing out. Some of Iain Duncan Smith's universal credit may well just end up being paid to the male breadwinner and have a disincentive for the second person to go out to work."

But that traditionalist instinct is, she says, "not the dominant strain. At the same time, you've got the George Osborne/Nick Clegg, Liberal Tory approach which says the family is entirely private and the public sector should have nothing to do with it unless there's a real crisis, because that will create dependence."

As evidence, she cites a measure in the Welfare Reform Bill to incentivise separated parents using the Child Support Agency to make private arrangements on child maintenance. Those who cannot do so will, under the proposals, have to pay £100 (or a staged £50 fee for those on benefit), plus a sizeable 'tax' on any payment agreed. "The consequence is that women are suddenly going to find they have less help for their children, and if they want someone to help them, they'll have to pay."

Women's chances, she argues, have been flung into reverse. "I can't think of any example in the last century that involved a greater turning back of the clock. After the First World War the nursery provision that allowed women to work closed down. Other than that, it is hard to think of any comparable period in history. I think they [the coalition] think about it as just money in people's pockets. For women, it's about really fundamental choices on how they live their lives."

Unaffordable childcare, the threat to maternity leave and disappearing child tax credits will, she says, have "a massive impact on your whole identity, your life and your decisions about how you balance work and family." On these issues, Cooper can speak with much authority.

Some think that, had she decided to run, she could now be leader of the Labour Party. Did it always seem clear to her that, as a mother of three small children, she should step aside as her husband, Ed Balls, campaigned for the top job, or did she agonise over her decision?

> "I do think we can win again, but we have to recognise that we still have a tremendous amount of work to make that possible."

"I did think about it, because people raised it with me. Ed took the view that I should stand if I wanted to. He was very clear about that, and that he would only stand if I didn't want to. But if you've got kids and you're working out how to balance work and family life, you always have to be quite ruthless and hard-headed about the things you can do and the things you can't. You have to be realistic about what's possible and what isn't.

"That's why, as a minister, I would not do evening dinners. It was just a step too far – not possible. You have to take decisions like that. I probably still work a lot more hours than a lot of parents would choose to, but I can balance that. We depend a lot on my mum, but there are things I know are just not right, right now. Running for the leadership, with all the time [the candidates] had to spend away from home [was one]."

Balls's campaign commitments left her not only running the home but also, as the non-cooking partner, "living on ready meals." Did she feel resentful? "No. [Working mothers] have to have the confidence about making the right decisions at different times. For Ed it was a different decision. We work in very different ways, and he is much better at compartmentalising things than I am."

Her choice of words seems to allow for the possibility – or, some might infer, the likelihood – that she will go for the leadership next time round. "I think right now we've got a leader who is doing a good job, and I'm certainly not going to speculate," she says. But she wouldn't rule it out? "All I'll say at the moment is that I'm concentrating on the job I'm doing. We're not thinking about future leadership but about the leadership we've got."

Some of Gordon Brown's closest allies believed long ago that Balls would some day be Chancellor but that his wife would lead the party. "That's very kind of them. I think this [her current job] is the right place to be."

She does not, however, seek to dispel the aura of toughness discerned by those who see her as a power-in-waiting. One columnist described her as "Iron Yvette", a label that provokes what sounds like delighted laughter. "Or steely. Pick your metal." Her female colleagues are, in some cases, more directly flattering. One backbencher told me not long ago that "Yvette walks on water." Cooper seems pleased by this compliment. "But I end up splashing sometimes," she says.

In Labour politics, women are still more prone to sink without trace. Both Eds, Miliband and Balls, were part of the charmed circle of (mostly male) special advisers who quickly became MPs and ministers, leapfrogging female counterparts as well as sitting MPs. What can be done to change that bias?

She suggests the Labour Party is making osmotic progress. "We actually have a situation where about half the shadow cabinet are women. We changed the rules to [make it] 30 per cent, but the way people voted went further… The image I have is that every generation of women stands on the shoulders of the women who have gone before. It's only because of the battles Harriet [Harman] and other women fought that it was possible for me to become a minister and take maternity leave."

There are, however, limits to Cooper's sisterly inclinations. When she first took over the Home Office portfolio from Balls in the reshuffle following Alan Johnson's resignation, almost her first job was to respond

to Theresa May's announcement of the Government review of counter-terrorism measures. The Commons encounter between two women attracted almost as much notice around Westminster as the contemporaneous furore over two male Sky Sports presenters' complaints that a female linesman was unlikely to understand the offside rule.

Do she and May get on? "Despite the fact that we were both elected at the same time, I wouldn't say I knew her well." When I ask the same question later about William Hague, her former opposite number, she is much more enthusiastic. "Very well, actually. He was very good at providing briefings and very open about things he was concerned about and that might become a problem later. I think his judgment on individual country issues was often pretty good."

Although she criticises Hague's realist foreign policy and the bungled response to early events of the Arab spring, her chillier response is reserved for May's handling of police cuts. Does Cooper agree with the findings of the Windsor report on pay and conditions, which signalled a curb on bonuses for senior officers?

"The problem is you have a series of reviews happening at the same time as a 20 per cent cut in the police budget. The scale of cuts is a serious problem. For Theresa May to pick a fight with the police, which is the way she's been handling this, is the wrong approach. Of course you should debate reforms, but ultimately it should be about the police and government working together.

"What was really destructive is Theresa May's speech a week before the Windsor report, pre-empting a report she hadn't seen… It creates a climate of picking a fight rather than constructive reforms, and I think that's the wrong approach when over 12,000 police officers' jobs are being lost."

More surprisingly, Cooper has also found herself at variance with her own close colleague, Sadiq Khan, the Shadow Justice Secretary and one of Ed Miliband's closest allies. After Khan made a speech deploring some aspects of Labour's crime strategy, Cooper said Labour should be "proud" of its crime record. Her remarks were interpreted as a slap down to Khan. Is that how she intended them to sound?

"Sadiq's [*Guardian*] article was exactly right. You've got to be tough on crime, and we've got to maintain that approach. It's the right thing to do." But Khan also said in his speech that Labour should have done "much better" in tackling reoffending and "should have been bolder in putting forward progressive arguments." The aim should be, he added, to get prison numbers down.

While Cooper concedes that objective is desirable, crime levels permitting, she appears to widen the division, saying: "I think you've got to look at the whole strategy. I don't think you can pick out [different areas] because overall … we did the right thing. The overall impact was to bring down crime by 43 per cent… You can have a debate on where you go from here, but I don't think we should say we got it wrong in terms of our overall approach. I don't [believe] we did."

In other words, she and Khan still disagree? "Well, we've talked a lot about it. I think we would agree on the importance on bringing down crime… There will be strong agreement between Sadiq and me about that."

On other parts of the record, Cooper is more critical. Labour, she says "had not done enough on women caring for [elderly] parents, aunts and uncles… We'd made progress around childcare; the next stage was to make progress on social care and helping older women."

Though eager to stress Labour's successes, she also lists the "things we didn't get right." She cites the attempts to introduce 90 days and 42 days detention without charge of terror suspects. "We shouldn't have done that. We got ourselves into the wrong place. We should have done the transitional arrangements around immigration [from] Eastern Europe. You can look back on what should have happened on bank regulations, not just in Britain but around the world."

On the high watermarks of office, she returns to crime. "I think the crime record is a hugely important one. It was right to increase the number of police, right to have new anti-social behaviour powers and right to do a lot of the things we did on crime."

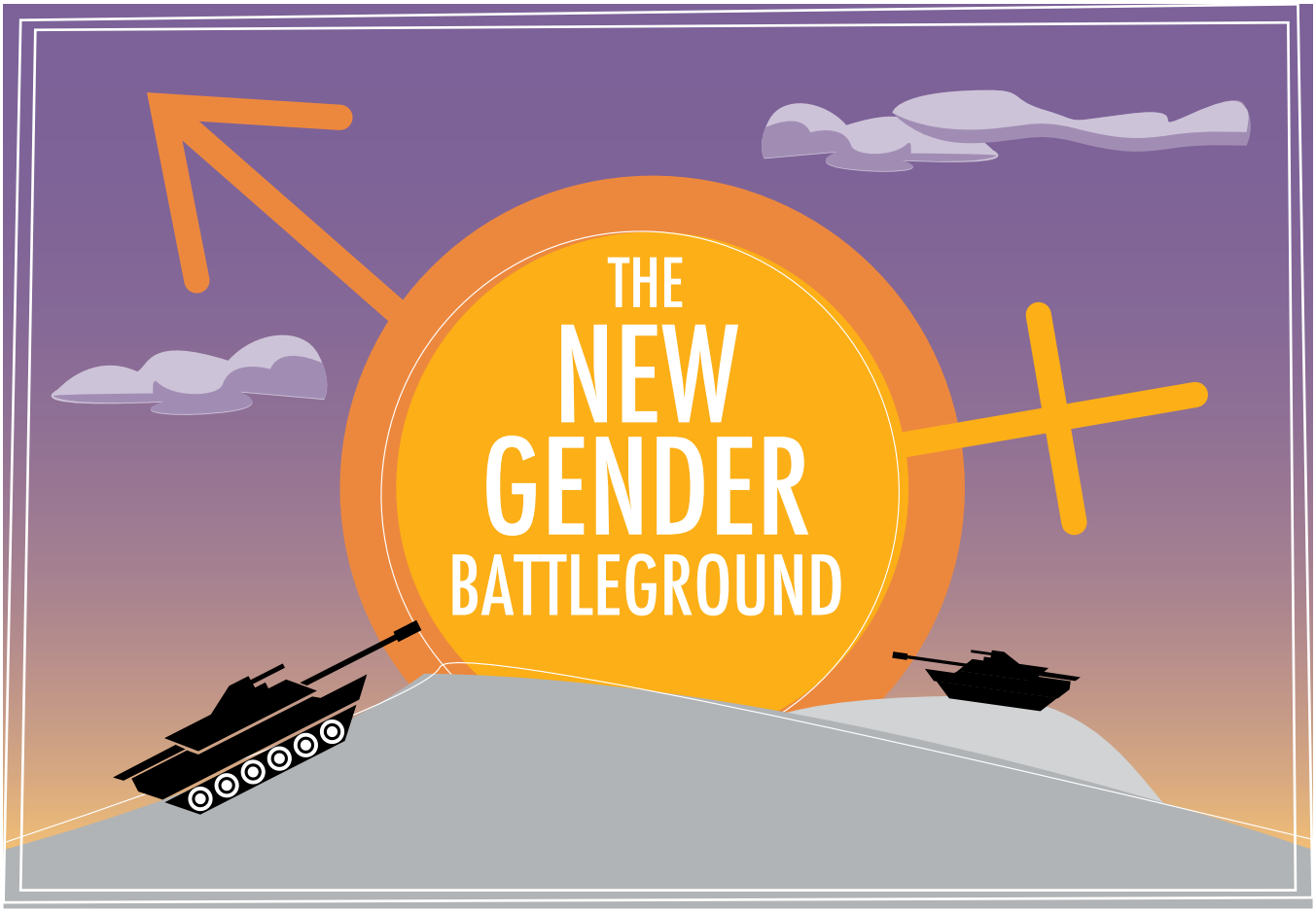
Whatever Labour's other flaws, she warns against "falling into the prissy caricature that Nick Clegg is trying to create. There are areas where we didn't do the right thing, but equally what they [the coalition] are doing, by trying to knock or get rid of the Human Rights Act and electing police commissioners, is actually removing the traditional checks and balances in our unwritten constitution." She and Khan, she says, will be working jointly on constitutional issues.

Although Cooper will be backing a Yes vote on AV in the May referendum, her endorsement of the campaign being led by Ed Miliband is conspicuously tepid. "I think actually the most important thing is local elections … and council services. It [AV] is not an area in which I've ever had a strong interest and involvement. I think it would be better than the current system, but no system is perfect. The more significant issue affecting most people at the moment is what's happening in terms of the impact on their services."

Does she think the coalition will survive for a full term? "If Nick Clegg was prepared to do such a complete reversal on student tuition fees, it's hard to see what would be too big for him to swallow as the price of staying in power. I find it hard to see what issue would be big enough to make the Lib Dems walk away. Also, they don't want to go back to their electorate any time soon.

"On the other hand, you see these huge tensions… But it [a collapse of the coalition] doesn't look the most likely scenario at the moment." That leaves the question of whether Labour can regain power. "I do think we can win again, but we have to recognise that we still have a tremendous amount of work to make that possible." Ultimately, she thinks Labour's handling of the economy will be vindicated.

"That is the story that history will tell. But we can't wait for history. We have to make those arguments now." Labour's as-yet unwritten history allows for the possibility that, after some future victory for the centre-left, Yvette Cooper will lead her party and her country. ■




GENDER EQUALITY HAS become something of a hidden social justice issue. When in power, Labour made tangible advances, both in terms of policy and in improving female representation in politics. Operating alongside the brash confidence of 90s 'new feminism', this incremental progress slightly obscured the deep ways gender continues to impact on our society and politics.

But this is changing. The invisibility of women during the last general election campaign and the coalition's spending cuts have reminded everybody how far there is still to go. Throughout this magazine, you can see that women are still unequal – and some of the things that can be done to change that.

Here we suggest seven campaigns and issues that can build on this moment and mobilise support for gender equality – small things that could make a big difference.

## MAKE WOMEN THE STORY OF LABOUR'S POLICY REVIEW

**DEBORAH MATTINSON**
is a pollster and co-founder of BritainThinks

One gloomy winter morning in 1989, Patricia Hewitt – who was Neil Kinnock's policy chief at the time – and I gave a presentation on 'the gender gap' to a specially convened shadow cabinet away day. The work of the policy review teams was about to start. Our audience was all men, with the exception of Jo Richardson, the shadow women's minister. Some flicked distractedly through their newspapers as we spoke. Our appeal was to self-interest. Our thesis then is as true today: Labour must attract a greater share of the women's vote to win.

Unlike much of Europe and the US, the women's vote in Britain had tended towards the right. Had the suffragettes failed and women never won the vote, Labour would have won every election since the Second World War. New Labour's triumph in 1997 was its appeal to women voters. Later, as times got tough, the women's vote propped Labour up – without women, as I warned then, 2005 would have resulted in a hung parliament. By 2010, this prophecy had come true.

Almost a year into the coalition Government, the parties' share of the vote shows no significant gender gap. What we do see, however, is that women are much more likely to be 'don't knows' – at 20 per cent, almost twice as undecided as men. In uncertain times, both economically and politically, women reserve judgment on what is right or wrong for the country. Focus groups confirm that, right now, the jury is out.

Yet women's attitudes remain 'Labour leaning'. They are less


**REBECCA ASHER** is the author of *Shattered: Modern Motherhood and the Illusion of Equality*. She was the Deputy Editor of Woman's Hour and an Executive Producer at BBC Radio 4

My son's nursery has one male member of staff. It is lucky to have him: less than 3 per cent of the UK's childcare workforce are men. At home, most toddlers are primarily cared for by their mothers. So from the earliest age we are taught that looking after children is women's work.

You don't find men in childcare for the same reasons you don't them in the other 'five Cs' (caring, cashiering, catering, cleaning and clerical work): it's badly paid, has low status and, perhaps more than any other occupation, is seen as something that men just do not do.

But, if children are well cared for, does this matter? Yes it does. Wholly feminised professions tend to remain poorly paid and undervalued. If we want to advance the prospects of childcare workers we need to bring more men in. A quarter of British men say that they would consider working in this field but that they currently feel excluded from it. Moreover, female domination of childcare reinforces traditional gender roles in the private sphere.

But, most importantly, this situation especially matters to those children who are deprived of male involvement in their lives. There's now strong evidence to show that fathers' close involvement is of psychological and educational benefit to children. Changing the make up of the childcare workforce would help show fathers – and mothers – the positive role that men can play.

There is substantial public support to have more men in the early years workforce. So what can we do about it? First, the Government should raise the bar of qualifications in childcare, which will help drive up pay for this demanding, vital work. There is cultural and campaigning pressure that we can bring to bear too. Parents should agitate for more men and vote with their feet for those nurseries and children's centres that employ them. Fathers – and grandfathers – should volunteer in these settings. And schools should encourage young men to consider caring professions alongside other more traditional options.

We mustn't be defeatist. Only a couple of decades ago male nurses in the UK were freakish figures of fun. Now they make up about 14 per cent of the nursing workforce.

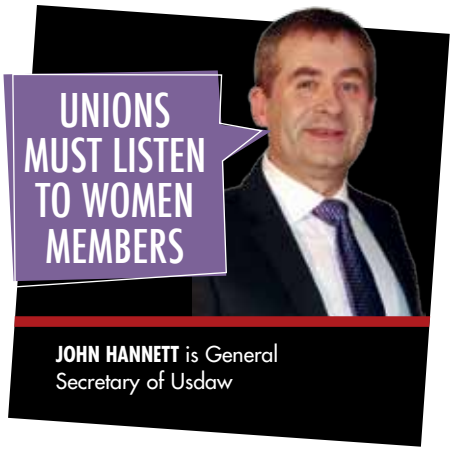
Government should act but we must play our part too: securing a greater role for men in the early lives of our children would bring huge benefits to us all. ■

likely than men to think 'the burden from Britain's economic troubles is being fairly shared'. They feel more financially vulnerable (+16 per cent) and more concerned about their (and their children's) financial future (+15 per cent). My own agency – BritainThinks – has conducted a new survey of the 71 per cent who define themselves as middle class which reveals six distinctive groups divided by wealth, lifestyle and attitudes. Women were more likely to make up the two most financially stretched: Bargain Hunters and Squeezed Strugglers. The latter is the only group most likely to vote Labour.

Women are less likely to agree that 'People expect government to do too much for them' and more likely to agree that 'I will get more back from public services than I pay in taxes'. They are also less likely than men to agree that 'if someone is not ill and has been unemployed for more than a year they're just not trying' and more likely to agree that 'gay couples should have the same rights as heterosexual couples'.

It follows, perhaps, that women are cooler than men towards the Conservative Party. They 'trust' the Conservatives less. Focus groups reveal an underlying anxiety that the Conservatives are uncaring. Women's hopes for the coalition have been shattered by Lib Dem compliance with unpopular cuts. They feel let down by Nick Clegg.

So, women who abandoned Labour in 2010 are again up for grabs – but not yet moving across in significant enough numbers. Following that shadow cabinet presentation in 1989, much of the policy development and communication strategy that followed had women firmly in mind. The result was a transformation in women's voting patterns. Labour would be wise to apply the same focus in the coming months, placing women at the centre of its decision-making. It can't win without them. ■




**JOHN HANNETT** is General Secretary of Usdaw

On Budget Day this year, hundreds of Usdaw reps and activists across the UK organised campaign activity in their workplaces, highlighting changes to benefits and tax credits for working families. Leaflets, posters, surveys, pledge cards, balloons and stickers all helped raise awareness of the cuts.

Two thirds of our members, the majority of whom are women, rely on in-work benefits to make ends meet. And over 30 per cent rely on the union to find out what they can claim. Usdaw's 'Claim It' campaign – which ran from 2008-2010 – improved take-up of tax credits, the Sure Start Maternity Grant, and the Health in

Pregnancy Grant. Twenty four per cent of our members found out about the Health in Pregnancy Grant as a result of our campaign.

## Women have been at the forefront of shaping our campaigning agenda for some years now

But campaigning on Budget Day was not just about telling members they were losing out. We wanted to make the union more visible, building the confidence of Usdaw reps and letting members know we are trying to win them a better deal.

This is all a far cry from the days when for most members, their only contact with their trade union was being asked to vote on the annual pay settlement. Usdaw's agenda is now broader than ever and workplace campaigning on issues such as in-work benefits and tax credits for families is as much a part of our core activity as pay bargaining and representation. And it is in large part down to our women members that this change has taken place.

Women have been at the forefront of shaping our campaigning agenda for some years now. Six years ago we launched our national Supporting Parents and Carers campaign because women told us that work life balance mattered just as much as pay. Usdaw's Women Workers and Safe Journeys to Work campaign responds to the difficulties women face in getting to and from work in the 24/7 economy. Cuts to bus services mean women in particular can't get home after their shift. And all too often car parks are badly lit and workers have to park well away from the store entrance. Regional get-togethers for women members on journeys to work have brought more women into union activity.

Our campaigns energise women because they speak to their immediate concerns. The issues we take up demonstrate that we understand the pressures women are under and have something to offer them. Our campaigns are a route into trade union activity. For the first time in our history more than half of Usdaw reps and activists are women.

Unions can be a powerful voice for women workers. But this will only happen if unions listen to women members, get the issues right and ensure that women are active and involved, at all levels of the trade union movement. ■


In 1999, Scottish Labour used the opportunity of a new parliament to place the importance of equal gender representation at the very heart of Scottish democracy. We were duly rewarded with a real breakthrough in female representation when the Labour Group in the Scottish Parliament was exactly 50-50. In fact, with the total number of female MSPs at around 33 per cent, we were up there with the Scandinavian parliaments. It was the hallmark of a modern and outward-looking parliament, reflecting the population we sought to represent and addressing that fundamental political injustice: women's lack of power.

Yet despite this progress, after the elections this May the First Minister will almost certainly be a man. Furthermore, although Scottish Labour continued to return high numbers of female MSPs in 2003 and 2007 (28 and 23 respectively – both years greater than the total number of women elected for the Conservatives, SNP and Liberal Democrats combined), it's looking like we may fall way short of our 50-50 target, as a number of women MSPs stand down or move on to pastures new. In total, six women are standing down at this election – myself included – and it is highly unlikely that these MSPs will be replaced by other women.

There are three clear reasons why female representation in Scotland finds itself under threat of decline:

1. **We failed to institutionalise female representation in Scotland.** We did not do enough to emphasise the importance of a parliament with a high percentage of female representatives. As a result, our achievements were fragile and when the challenges came to reinstate the status quo, we were left vulnerable to attack.
2. **The presence of female MSPs became an end in itself.** We failed to communicate to the public that strong female representation was not only good for the Scottish Parliament, but good for society – good for families, carers and for working mums.
3. **We wrongly assumed that we had shifted the political consensus.** We believed that once women were in the Scottish Parliament, it would fast become a political norm and therefore women would be easily selected. Indeed although there has been some progress in putting women forward for the selection processes in Scotland, too often the mechanisms used to deliver equal representation have been taken for granted or have been hastily abandoned when faced with even minor opposition.

If we are not careful, we will go back to the old stereotypes of political representation. Labour's achievement of 50-50 in the Scottish Parliament was an enormous step forward for female representation and there is little doubt that it had a substantial impact on the political landscape in Scotland. We must learn these lessons and act now to stop any progress slipping through our fingers and politics returning to business as usual. ■


**JUDE ROGERS** is an arts journalist who writes regularly for The Guardian, Observer, The Word and the New Statesman

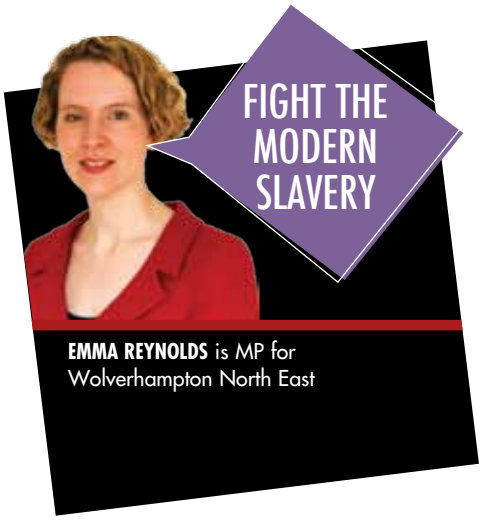
The 22-year-old working class girl from South London, number one in the pop charts on both sides of the Atlantic, speaking out, loud and proud, for women in pop. The 57-year-old daughter of a civil servant from Liverpool, revolutionising one of Britain's biggest arts centres, and running the Women Of The World Festival to promote female artists. The school feminism group from East London on Radio 4. The ordinary people criticising female stereotypes on film and TV in national newspapers.

Look around you. Strong women are dominating pop culture. Some of them are well known, like pop star Adele and South Bank Director Jude Kelly, women bending the rules at the top of their game. Some of them have been picked up in the public eye more recently, like the feminism society at the Mulberry School For Girls in Tower Hamlets, one of the poorest, most multicultural boroughs in the country. Then there are the media consumers begging for more representative, more visible female role models in *The Observer*, being listened to at last, being given room to breathe.

But why isn't more being made of Labour's women? We know they are there, beavering away in their committees and their constituencies, doing their good deeds away from the spotlight. During the last election campaign, they were almost invisible – the white men centre stage, women following meekly, giving up their screen time for a party leader's spouse. During the Labour leadership contest, Diane Abbott's candidacy was often framed by insiders as a concession to gender, rather than the start of something new and a chance to bring female faces to the forefront.

Labour has so many hardworking, inspirational women, from potential party leaders like Harriet Harman and Yvette Cooper, to strong newcomers like Stella Creasy and Emma Reynolds. If we follow these women through local – or social – networks, we know their hard work. If we don't, like most British voters, it is easy to miss what they do.

We live, for good or ill, in a multimedia culture. Visibility means everything, but it doesn't have to mean cheap tricks. Women like Adele and Jude Kelly don't use the shorthand of soulless glamour to engage the public – they use friendliness, openness, words and hard-won wisdom. Thankfully, these are qualities every female Labour MP has – and now Labour must put them centre-stage. More public appearances, more targeted media strategies, more opportunities for women to see, not just guess, what these MPs do. And the more they see Labour women at their best – ordinary women doing extraordinary things – the more they will believe that they can get there, too. ■


**EMMA REYNOLDS** is MP for Wolverhampton North East

Europe is one of the top destinations for human trafficking and so the rising number of victims in the UK is no surprise. Thousands of women and children are trafficked into our country every year. They often come on the promise of jobs as waitresses, nannies or cleaners. But on their arrival they are imprisoned and forced into slave labour or prostitution. The Home Office estimates that 2600 women were trafficked into Britain in 2009 for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Victims are mainly from Eastern European countries, but also come from as far afield as East Asia, South America and Africa.

Prosecution rates are pitifully low and pro-active policing to root out trafficking – such as brothel raids – is being scaled down as police cuts bite.

Despite the scale of the problem, the Government dragged

its feet on opting into the new European Directive to combat human trafficking. After strong campaigning on this issue – inside and outside of the House of Commons – they have finally agreed to do so. The draft law affords greater protection to victims and makes it easier for our authorities to bring to justice British nationals operating in other European countries. It is a no-brainer that cross border crime demands cross border action, yet David Cameron is more interested in keeping his party's Eurosceptics onside.

## Cameron's lack of action on human trafficking is damaging and inexcusable

As Yvette Cooper has highlighted, trafficking will inevitably spike in the run-up to the 2012 Olympics. International sporting events have long been a magnet for traffickers and pimps, making the need for action all the more urgent.

Meanwhile the International Development Secretary, Andrew Mitchell, has refused to commit to core funding for the new UN Women's Agency – heightening uncertainty over its future role. And in a bizarre intervention, the Government has blocked a Council of Europe agreement asserting that violence against women constitutes a breach of human rights. The yawning chasm between this Government's words and its deeds is undermining its moral authority both at home and abroad.

Two hundred years ago, Britain became the first country to outlaw slavery. In stark contrast, Cameron's lack of action on human trafficking is damaging and inexcusable. His refusal to work with our European partners to tackle this modern form of slavery is just another example of the lacklustre foreign policy being pursued by this Government. Proud of our history, Britain should be at the forefront of multilateral action to tackle it, not sniping from the sidelines. ■

# REVERSE THIS GOVERNMENT'S UNFAIR PENSION CHANGES

**RACHEL REEVES** is MP for Leeds West

It can be hard enough planning for your retirement, and for most of us it's important to have some certainty about when we'll start receiving our pensions. But if you are a woman born after April 1953, you will have begun your career expecting to retire at 60, and not only will you have had to adapt to the increase in the State Pension Age announced soon after Labour first got into power, but you will now have to change your plans again as this Government increases it further and more quickly.

And women in their 50s aren't financially resilient enough to deal with this change. Women turning 57 this spring, for example, have average pension savings of just £9,100 and 40 per cent of them don't have any pension savings at all. Most will have started work at a time when part-time workers had no rights to access occupational pension schemes. Many of them have taken career breaks, brought up children, and been paid lower wages than their male peers. The Government is now asking them to wait up to two years extra before receiving their state pension – with only seven years to plan.

Labour agrees the pension age needs to keep rising, and had already legislated to increase it – equalising it for men and women by 2020 and legislating to increase both to 66 by 2026, 67 by 2036 and 68 by 2046.

The Coalition Agreement said that the timetable needed to be revisited, but promised the pension age would not start to rise to 66 sooner than 2020 for women. But the women's pension age will now be 65 in 2018 and rise to 66 by 2020, reneging on the Government's promises to those approaching retirement.

The basic state pension is £102.15 per week, so the loss of income for these women will be more than £10,000, and for those in receipt of Pension Credit, the figure is closer to £15,000.

The Turner Commission recommended that men and women need fifteen years to adjust to changes in their state pension age. The independent Pensions Policy Institute agree that women may need more than ten years notice to adjust. The state pension age should be equalised, but seven years is not enough time to prepare.

## We need to support the many women who will be disproportionally affected by these changes

It is worth noting that no man will have to wait more than an extra year to get his pension. The average 57-year-old man has pension savings of £52,800. They have not had to adjust their plans by five years already, and have benefited from better pay and conditions throughout their working careers.

Instead of these unfair changes I would support an acceleration of the timetable for both men and women from 65 to 66 between 2020 and 2022. This would affect 1.2 million fewer people than under the current new plans, affect an equal number of men and women, and would give a decade's notice to everyone affected. This would still deliver £20bn of savings for the Government, but no one would have an increase in their state pension age of more than a year.

We need to support the many women who will be disproportionally affected by these changes. It's not too late to get the Government to change their minds. ■

# Women, as ever, will keep the big society from falling apart

Pat Thane
is Research Professor in Contemporary History, Kings College London

The Government's primary charge against Labour is that it undervalued society and overvalued the state whilst in office. But Labour must not let this rhetoric blind them to how much vital volunteering already goes on – or obscure the good that's delivered by the state.

This is particularly important for women, who do much of the volunteering and have gained so much from the state's promotion of gender equality over the last half-century. Britain still has a long way to go, but the gender gap is closer than it was 40 years ago – largely due to state action, much of it by Labour. But now there are real dangers of slipping backwards, as unemployment and cuts to statutory and voluntary services hit women in particular, while women also fill the void left as the state retreats from areas such as care for children, the disabled and older people.

We mustn't forget the dramatic progress that was made by the Equal Pay Act in 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975. The impact of these has been clear: the gap between the median hourly earnings of women and men working full-time was 46 per cent in 1970 and is now 10.2 per cent. This average disguises wide differences: the gap is 42.4 per cent among City brokers for example; and whilst there is now parity among physiotherapists, there is still a 28.5 per cent gap among doctors. The gap is even wider among lower-paid workers. But the progress is real and it is difficult to imagine this change without state intervention. Resistance to gender equality in the spheres of business and politics, and comparisons with countries where the state has introduced positive discrimination like Norway, suggest that left to itself society changes slowly.

But the state did not act spontaneously. The most important driver for state action has been voluntary action by those people who are most affected by inequality – and by their supporters. Women campaigned for equal pay from at least the 1930s and persuaded the Conservatives to grant it in the public sector in 1955. Women in the Labour movement and feminist groups like the Fawcett Society fought on through the 1960s: the 1970 Act was not just down to the Dagenham women strikers. Similar campaigns fuelled progress in other equality areas such as race. Society played a big role in influencing the state.

Labour must insist that state and society are not opposed to each other but are closely complementary. This is obvious in social welfare. The first state welfare measures in the early twentieth century – such as those designed to reduce infant and maternal deaths – happened because voluntary organisations demanded them. They identified urgent problems, proposed solutions and implemented them where possible. But they knew voluntary action could not cope with major problems nationally so they urged the state to provide and they worked in co-operation with it. This approach was strongly supported by the founders of the modern welfare state, including William Beveridge, who was himself a passionate advocate of voluntary action complementing the state.

So we have long had a big and active society – and in fact we can measure exactly how big. Since 2001 the Citizenship Survey has monitored the number of people who volunteer and people's attitudes to their communities. It shows that from 2001 to 2009-10, 40 per cent of adults had volunteered with an organisation at least once in the previous 12 months, 25 per cent at least once a month. And that's excluding 'informal' voluntary help to neighbours, friends, the community, regularly performed by 65 per cent of over 65s in 2011, according to women's voluntary organisation WRVS. Also in 2009-10, 85 per cent of

> The first state welfare measures in the early twentieth century happened because voluntary organisations demanded them

people "thought their community was cohesive… their local area was a place where people of different backgrounds got on well together" – up from 80 per cent in 2003. This does not sound like mass discontent with 'broken Britain', that 'multiculturalism' has failed, or that community action is dead. But the survey has now been stopped, another casualty of the cuts. It's a pity that we won't be able to measure the impact of government policy on volunteering and people's contentment with their communities, and what becomes of the 'Big Society' we already have.

It is likely to contract. All too predictably, women will suffer disproportionately from cuts to benefits and services such as refuges for victims of domestic violence. Meanwhile, the Government has shocked other Europeans by objecting to domestic violence being described in the 'Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women' as a "violation of human rights", preferring "constitutes a serious obstacle to women's enjoyment of human rights". They are proposing that even this does not apply during armed conflict, despite the abuse of women in so many recent conflicts. With exquisite sensitivity, this news was released on the centenary of International Women's Day.

Women will work to fill the gaps in devastated services. More grandmothers will give up time to care for grandchildren so that their daughters can work, or for frail or disabled neighbours without other support. They will keep the 'Big Society' going, with no thanks to, or probably from, David Cameron. Labour must speak up for them. ■

# After the cuts, is feminism changing?

In the 90s a new generation sought to make feminism more mainstream, by focusing on incremental improvements to everyday equality, rather than the more fundamental overhaul of power structures demanded by earlier generations. As a political project, this became about getting more women into parliament and the boardroom; culturally it focused on issues of 'choice' and 'empowerment'. But as the cuts kick in, are we seeing a new, more radical wave of feminism emerge? We asked Ellie Levenson and Laurie Penny, two feminist friends of different stripes, to discuss the impact of the New Labour years and whether feminism is getting angry again under the coalition.

## 1997 and all that

***—Laurie Penny:*** Part of what afflicted both the women's movement and the movements for social justice and equality was the idea that just because we had a Labour government in power, and had 'Blair's Babes,' then there was nothing to fight for. I was ten in 1997 and I remember being told that it was all fine and all fixed; it was all 'ladettes', the Spice Girls and Girl Power. But it didn't take much to suddenly realise how much there was left to do.

***—Ellie Levenson:*** I was 18 when Labour came to power and maybe it was the result of coming of age under a Labour Government that enabled me to think about feminism a bit more freely. Some of the big battles – like having visible female MP's – had been won and that allowed us to focus on some other issues…

***—LP:*** …Was there a sense of disappointment then?

***—EL:*** Well not for me. At the time the 'Blair's Babes' picture seemed wonderful, something like a hundred women in parliament and that was great. It was only in retrospect that I realised how patronising that picture was.

***—LP:*** There must have been huge excitement after going from having very few female MP's prior to '97, to having significantly more afterwards.

***—EL:*** Except you were born under Thatcher. I'm not the first to argue this but although I would never hold Thatcher up as a feminist icon, the mere presence of a woman at the top was really important. We're the first generation to have grown up knowing that you get female prime minsters – and knowing that you can get bad ones as well.

***—LP:*** The flip-side of that, though, is that in the celebrations of having some women at the top, we neglect all the women at the bottom. The glass ceiling is an important issue but not the only issue. And while people focus on the glass ceiling, there are lots more women standing in the basement, which is rapidly filling up with water. The pay difference between men and women in part-time labour is much greater than in top jobs in the City. There has been a perception, almost mirroring Labour's economic policy, that by focusing on improving conditions for people at the top of the rung, there will be trickle-down effects which will improve everyone's lives. I'm not sure it works like that though. I'm not sure you can have 'trickle-down' feminism.

***—EL:*** I think it's important to get it right at the top as well as the bottom, because though changing the pay gap lower down obviously has real consequences, it's also about winning a perception battle.

***—LP:*** Absolutely. But I'm not sure feminism can operate only in the sphere of aspiration. It doesn't acknowledge what will actually change conditions for everyone: a complete reworking of how gender, labour and power work in this country, and that's what's been missing.

***—EL:*** Can I ask you a question then? What I'm interested to know is what would you like to be done? Because we both approach feminism in a very different way and they are not necessarily at odds because they focus on different bits of feminism. I'm interested in the choices we make in our everyday life but of course if you're poor you have far fewer choices anyway. What would you like to be done to stop that?

***—LP:*** One thing has to be childcare, because female unpaid labour is still the massive elephant in the room. Whilst a huge number of people in this country are unemployed, a huge amount of necessary labour is done for free.

***—EL:*** My socialist instinct – which is caring for the vulnerable in society – isn't so much that I want the unpaid labour to be paid, it's that I want it to be shared more equitably. So if men occupied more of the caring roles then I wouldn't care that it wasn't paid.

***—LP:*** I disagree because I think one of the ways capitalist society makes people do stuff that's not valued is by not paying. It's a question of how you locate caring, child-care, labour duties and housework within the spectrum of human work. I'm a socialist but my socialism comes from my feminism, not the other way around.

***—EL:*** That's interesting because my feminism comes from my socialism. Almost everything I believe comes first

from my socialism, from a sense of the unfairness at people being born with unequal opportunities.

## Angry feminism and fluffy feminism

*—LP:* I think that feminism doesn't actually have to be either soft and cuddly and trying to appeal to a wider audience, or else angry. But the problem comes when people see 'fluffy feminism' as the full extent of feminism.

*—EL:* Feminists who don't like me would say that I'm one of those cuddly feminists, presenting a more palatable view of feminism. But that's exactly what I wanted to do. Although you do have to be angry to force change, I think the problem in the last 20 to 30 years is that people thought feminists were only angry. I didn't want that perception to put people off. My idea of feminism is about choice, and it really doesn't matter what choice you make, so long as you're making a real choice. What I wanted to show is that you can be a feminist but make what are seen as non-feminist choices such as staying at home, glamming up when you go out, or even being anti-abortion. It's not about dumbing feminism down, it's about making feminism about individual choices.

*—LP:* I think choice isn't enough. So often women are told that their lives are great because they can choose whatever they want to do, but in effect there is a limited range of options and they are punished if they don't make the right choices.

*—EL:* So you think we're given a choice, but only insofar as we can choose how we want to be oppressed?

*—LP:* Absolutely. If you have a baby, you can choose to go back to work almost immediately but there will be people in the office who look at you funny, or people in your family who wonder why you're not taking more time off work to look after your baby. On the other hand you can choose to give up your career, but eventually, especially as a single parent, you would be punished financially and people would claim being unemployed is disempowering and setting a negative example for your child. And I disagree with your idea that you can make any choice you like and still be a feminist. The abortion question is quite simple for me because a woman's right to self-determination is an absolute baseline of equality. For me it's perfectly okay to say that you would never have an abortion and that you don't necessarily like it when other people do, but I can't consider any person who says that they consider abortion morally wrong to be a feminist.

*—EL:* I think what you're actually trying to do here is tell people how to think. I'm pro-choice when it comes to abortion but I understand that some people aren't. So I wouldn't want to exclude all of those people from being a feminist. That's like saying to be a feminist, here are some absolute beliefs you have to have, and if you don't have them you're not a feminist.

## Feminism under the coalition

*—EL:* I think there are lot of people who think that because we have a Conservative government feminism is doomed. But I don't think that's the case. I don't think all feminists are on the left, therefore just because we've got a more rightwing government it's not correct just to think feminism is doomed. I don't think the Conservative government wants to take a step back and make us all Stepford Wives. But I think economically it is going to be disastrous and the cuts will hit the poorest and women more than men.

*—LP:* I think we're seeing a lot of women from across the social spectrum becoming radicalised by the Tory cuts and by their attacks on women. I was at an anti-cuts rally the other day and I saw a 'Single Mums for Social Justice' group who told me the banners they were holding were the same ones they made in the eighties and they had decided to bring them out again. I hope a resurgence of feminism has given people like these more confidence to self-organise and speak out.

*—EL:* The point about the banners not coming out since the eighties is that, well, Labour wasn't in government then. It's different when you're in government, you have to be realistic and I think one of the problems that we saw under Labour was that many on the left were disgruntled that we had to dilute some of our demands in order to achieve others. Now back in opposition, yes we unfurl the banners again, but being in opposition is a different state of existence to being in government. I think it's a real travesty that many on the left seemed to be annoyed that we were in power and are now relishing being in opposition. I'd rather have diluted demands being seen to by a Labour government than the moral high-ground of opposition.

*—LP:* So how does that apply to feminism? Would you say you'd rather have diluted demands and sideline the more radical ones?

*—EL:* Yes, because my brand of feminism is quite diluted but also realistic and is grounded in my every day life. My every day life is making small-scale decisions and choices about what to wear, what jobs to take, what caring roles to take, who empties the dustbins. They're not the massive issues like 'am I allowed to leave the house without a man's permission' or 'do I have economic independence,' or 'do I have control of my own body?'

*—LP:* I can appreciate the argument which says if you ask for too much then you won't get it, but feminism from its history has been most successful when it has asked for most. In a way the anti-cuts movements is fostering a form of resistance that feminism has been lacking. It's about a wider reappraisal of women's working rights and their status and certainly I would say that there is an awareness of gender even in parts of the movement which aren't explicitly about gender.

*—EL:* I hadn't thought I was going on the TUC demo as a feminist, but as a Labour Party member and a member of society. I suppose feminism does come into that but in a way, feminism is everything and it's nothing. It's everything because being a man or a woman influences everything we do, and it's nothing because hopefully one day it won't. So I'm going as a socialist, not a feminist, though you can't stop being a feminist.

*—LP:* I would say I'm going as both; I don't divide the two. ■

Ellie Levenson is a journalist and author of The Noughtie Girl's Guide to Feminism. Her new book 50 Campaigns to Shout About is published by Oneworld in May.

Laurie Penny is a feminist blogger and columnist for the New Statesman

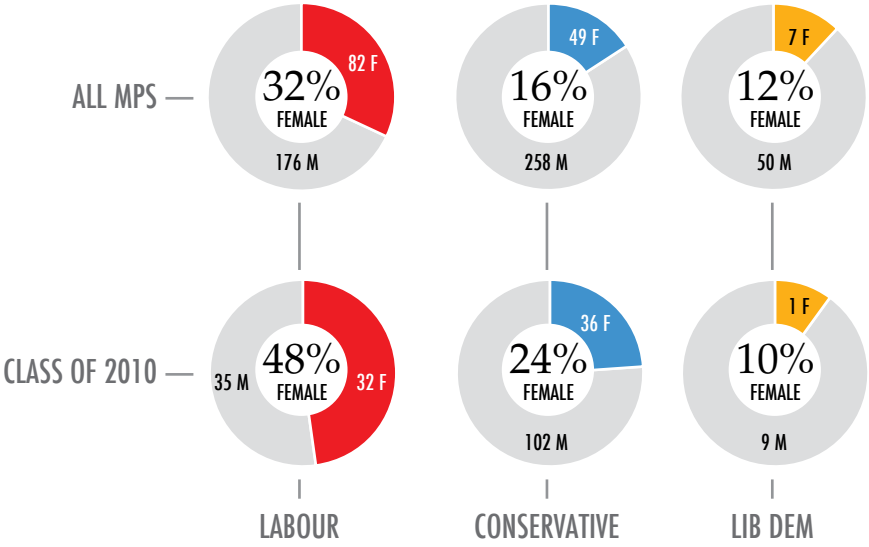
# Why Lib Dem women face electoral meltdown

Sunder Katwala
is General Secretary of the Fabian Society

Seema Malhotra
is Director of the Fabian Women's Network

## SINCE 1918 4719 MEN AND 355 WOMEN HAVE BEEN ELECTED TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

## THE CURRENT HOUSE




## THE LIB DEMS HAVE FAILED TO KEEP UP WITH THE OTHER PARTIES

The Lib Dem benches today – 7 women out of 57 MPs – are proportionately no less male dominated as in 1992 (two women out of twenty MPs) or 1935 (one woman out of ten MPs).

| TODAY | 1992 | 1935 |
|---|---|---|
| 7/57 | 2/20 | 1/10 |

## THE MAJORITIES OF ALL SEVEN WOMEN LIB DEM MPS PUT TOGETHER (17,224 VOTES) IS ONLY JUST GREATER THAN THAT OF NICK CLEGG IN SHEFFIELD HALLAM (15,284)

## ELECTION 2015: WHY LIB DEM WOMEN FACE THE RISK OF BEING WIPED OUT

Though only 7 of the 57 Lib Dem MPs are women, they hold five of the party's dozen most vulnerable seats.

1 **Lorely Burt (Solihull) 0.3%, 175 votes**
2 **Annette Brooke (Mid Dorset) 0.6%, 269 votes**
3 Norwich South 0.7%
4 Bradford East 0.9%
5 **Tessa Munt (Wells), 1.4%, 800 votes**
6 St Austell 2.8%
7= **Sarah Teather (Brent South) 3.0%, 1345 votes**
7= Somerton 3.0%
9 St Ives 3.7%
10 Manchester West 4.1%
11 Burnley 4.3%
12 **Jo Swinson, 4.6% East Dunfermline, 2184 votes**

## OTHER LIB DEM WOMEN MPS

**Lynne Featherstone**
(Hornsey and Wood Green), 12.5%, 7875 votes

**Jenny Willott**
(Cardiff Central), 12.7%, 4576 votes

| | LIB DEM WOMEN | LIB DEM MEN |
|---|---|---|
| Number of MPs | 7 | 50 |
| Average majority | 2318 | 6214 |
| 12 most vulnerable seats | 5 | 7 |
| 20 safest seats | 0 | 20 |

The marginalisation of women in the 2010 election campaign, the total absence of women from the coalition negotiations, and the low numbers of women in the new cabinet has meant that every party is now stressing their desire to speed up progress towards gender equality in politics.

It sounds like the race to the 50-50 party has finally begun. Yet with boundary reforms and seat reductions, the risk is the race will be lost before the next election, with all three parties losing momentum and Lib Dem women MPs facing political annihilation.

Labour has the strongest record and currently 32 per cent of the Parliamentary Labour Party are women. Prompted by the Lead for Women grass roots campaign, Ed Miliband declared his commitment to a 50-50 party of equal voice and power at every level. With 16 per cent of current Conservative MPs being women, their highest proportion ever, David Cameron can point to more progress than his predecessors but acknowledges the need to do more.

The Lib Dems, lagging behind in third place, hope to catch up. However, their election strategy for gender was disastrous – numbers of women MPs dropped from nine to seven. They also have no ethnic minority MPs. Having previously rejected positive action, including in 1998 when Baroness Williams called for an end to the Commons 'Old Boys' Network' and warned "we will not get more women involved just by providing more training and education", this year the party's Spring Conference passed an a 'priority candidates' list – an A list. This will do no harm and perhaps some good. But the debate showed the party has not appreciated how great a risk there is that Lib Dem women will face meltdown at the next election, or how the coalition's own reforms have cut off their real chance to make any progress by 2015.

New Fabian Society/Fabian Women's Network research shows that the Lib Dems would need to take urgent steps to avoid a collapse in gender balance, which would leave the party's Commons benches in 2015 even more male-dominated than the Liberal benches of the 1930s.

The meltdown threat arises from a toxic triple cocktail:

1. Firstly, political unpopularity. Having lost more than half of their support since the general election, the Lib Dems are preparing a defensive campaign, hoping to regain support and defend Lib Dem held seats. Even selecting many more women candidates to take on Tory and Labour MPs is unlikely to return as many MPs next time around.
2. Secondly, coalition populism. The Lib Dems have inadvertently scored an own goal on gender by supporting a smaller House of Commons. Shrinking the House to 600 will see the smallest new intake in any post-war election, slowing down progress since new intakes have a better gender balance than the whole House. Typically, around 60 to 80 MPs stand down at the end of a Parliament while up to 590 defend their seats. This time, many retirees will be replaced not by new hopefuls but MPs seeking a new berth after constituency mergers. The Lib Dems would have expected to select six or seven new candidates to replace retiring MPs; this will probably now fall to two or three – even if all current seats were deemed winnable.
3. Thirdly, the legacy of past selection patterns. Five of the Lib Dem women MPs are amongst the party's dozen most vulnerable seats. They are proportionately more electorally vulnerable than their male counterparts. The party's twenty safest seats are all held by men. This long-standing pattern is not unique to this Parliament. The causes are complex: chance, informal hierarchies of power, the sociology of political recruitment and electoral geography. Professional women Lib Dems have tended to fight southern marginals; there is only one woman among 11 Scots Lib Dem MPs, again holding the most vulnerable seat.

## If the current polls were even half right, not a single Lib Dem woman MP would survive

Lib Dem party strategists would be over the moon if they held four out of five seats at the next election. If an early election were held (under current boundaries) that would mean a parliamentary party of 43 men and two women, a drop from 13 per cent to 4.5 per cent of the party's MPs – half their presence in the 1930s. But if the current polls were even half right, not a single Lib Dem woman MP would survive.

The problem could get even worse if any Lib Dem women lose out in the boundaries scramble. The leadership will need to work out how to pragmatically protect them and perhaps encourage another retirement or two. Or might the party even, exceptionally, consider dropping its opposition to all women shortlists for the two or three constituencies where it will replace a sitting MP? More likely, it may seek to achieve a similar result by ensuring there are strong women in the field, and informal pressure highlighting the gender gap problem.

But such tinkering will merely limit the damage unless the Lib Dems respond to new boundaries by reopening every selection, with the aim that women candidates should contest a quarter of the party's 20 most defendable seats, rather than none of them. This might mean Sir Ming Campbell or Charles Kennedy swapping their safe seats with a colleague to defend a marginal. If this seems too difficult or painful, the party should admit it's willing to run the risk of only electing men in 2015.

The smaller Commons will also slow down Labour and Tory progress, though both parties hope to gain seats. Labour should adopt an all women shortlist in any winnable seat being defended by a woman MP from another party, within the current strategy to select women in 50 per cent of all winnable seats. The message would be that voting Labour could not reduce the number of women in parliament. No other party could claim this.

Some may worry about the impact on voter choice. This seems a weak argument. There were already 11 constituencies in 2010 where all three major parties selected a woman. And who spoke up about voter choice, or even noticed, the 267 constituencies where all three major party candidates were men? Political equality is a pre-requisite for, not just a consequence of, social equality. The gender challenge at the next election will test the commitment of the three parties to fairness in an unprecedented way. ■

# How the Tories are embedding inequality

Across government, and often unreported, changes are being made that will remove women from economic decision-making roles, reveals Nan Sloane. Labour must respond by putting women at the heart of its economic rethink.

Nan Sloane
is director of the Centre for Women and Democracy

There seems little doubt that we are seeing a sustained assault on the prosperity, prospects and independence of women in this country. The possibility that this is an unintended consequence of government policy is irrelevant; study after study has shown that women will suffer both economically and socially, and it seems likely that we are entering a new phase of women's long fight for equal rights.

Hitherto, much of the debate has focussed on the cuts themselves, and very little on the other changes coming out of government. But the coalition's attitude to gender equality is woven into the detailed fabric of its legislation. Take the Localism Bill, for instance, which proposes wide changes to the way local decision-making works. It is telling that only three of its measures seem to have been subjected to an assessment on their impact on inequality and, even then, women feature as a group disadvantaged more as part of other considerations than in their own right. The equality impact assessment on neighbourhood planning correctly identifies 'those whose responsibilities in caring for young children prevent them from attending public meetings held in the evening' as being excluded from the planning system, but does this as part of the section on 'People from black and minority ethnic communities'.

Changes are being made across government which are insidiously removing women from senior roles. Public decision-making is about more than just parliament and local elected office: up and down the country there are organisations ranging from the largest NHS Trusts to the smallest school governing body which deliver public policy and spend public money at local level.

Amongst those dealing with economic development are the Regional Development Agencies. The 1997 Labour Government set up business-led Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) capable of attracting investment and supporting growth in the varied economies of the regions. One of the first actions of the incoming 2010 coalition Government has been to abolish them and replace them with business-led Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPS) with much the same remit. There is still debate about how effective the RDAs were, and there is both a lack of clarity about how the new arrangements will work and a feeling that not much thought is going into it – last November Vince Cable himself described his own department's actions as 'Maoist and chaotic'. Nevertheless, the changes are going ahead: the RDAs will cease to exist in 2012 and 31 new LEPs have been approved and have recruited, or are recruiting, their boards.

Labour legislation requires equality impact assessments to be carried out for changes or cessations of service, but this seems not to apply to changes in decision-makers. Consequently, no equality impact assessment has been done on this major change in the country's economic structures. Nor, regrettably, does Labour appear to have called for one, despite the fact that the changes will have far-reaching consequences, not just for economic decision-making, but for both the diversity of economic engagement as a whole and the development of future prosperity.

The nine RDA boards are made up of people drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors. 27 per cent of RDA board members are women, and there are no all-male boards. Five have representation from BME communities, though only one (the East Midlands) includes a BME woman. Yorkshire Forward – generally considered one of the more successful RDAs – has 36 per cent female Board membership, and One North East, also generally viewed positively, has 33 per cent.

Comparable figures for the new LEPs are not yet available, since many are still recruiting board members. But it is already becoming clear that diversity will not be amongst their strong points. Just 13 per cent of members of the boards in the five partnerships which have already been approved (or 'recognised' in the curious terminology adopted by BIS) are women. None of the boards reaches a fifth female membership. One – Stoke & Staffordshire – has no women on it at all. BME communities seem also to be largely absent. Many other LEPs have shadow boards which are similarly unrepresentative – on the Birmingham & Solihull shadow board, for instance, there are three women but nobody from the Muslim community, whilst in Sheffield the shadow board is all-male. Sadly, these examples are typical of what is happening.

Recruitment procedures for LEP boards seem to have no diversity requirements, nor is there any indication that applications from under-represented groups would be welcome. And part of the trouble is that board membership is being drawn from precisely those groups in which women are least likely to be found.

LEP boards are made up of members from both the public and the private sectors, with the latter outnumbering the former. It might be expected that the public sector would be most likely to supply the women members, but in fact this is not the case. Only 14 per cent of local authority leaders are women (14.5 per cent of Labour leaders), only two elected executive mayors and 12 per cent of vice chancellors of English universities are female, although the figure is much better for college principals (29 per cent of sixth form college principals are women, for instance). Overall the picture is not good and nor do other parts of the public sector fare any better.

To compound this, the private sector is also massively under-strength when it comes to women in senior roles. All parties have expressed concern about this, and Lord Davies' recent report found that the situation for women in boardrooms is so serious (just 12.5 per cent of the boards of FTSE100 companies) that he described the UK as being "in the last chance corral". But whilst things are better further down the business food chain, they are still poor: according to the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) women make up only 29 per cent of their sector, although they contribute £130 billion to the economy. And it is at this point that the absence of women from decision-making roles and the needs of the economic recovery coincide.

Across the world, women's economic engagement is seen as one of the key drivers of growth. World Bank managing director Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, says that investment in women is smart economics, the UN believes that women hold the key to economic growth, and the United States are pouring resources into supporting women's businesses. Globally there are 200 million women entrepreneurs worldwide, and in many developing countries women's incomes are growing faster than men's.

The Federation of Small Businesses wants the UK to learn from the US and many EU countries and "encourage female entrepreneurship and increase female-owned businesses if it is to really grow the economy". Like many others, they recognise that women's economic activity creates both jobs and wealth, and that it should not be ignored or under-resourced.

Yet in the UK women find it harder to start businesses, harder to get finance for them, harder to win public sector contracts and harder to survive. These are precisely the kinds of problems both the outgoing RDAs and the incoming LEPs should be addressing if local economies are to thrive, yet the Government merely says that it is "looking into" the issue of female entrepreneurship, and new bodies are less rather than more female. As a result, the quality of their decision-making will suffer, and local economic growth will be more sluggish than it actually needs to be.

This is not just rhetoric. Lord Davies in his report on women on boards cited evidence that strong growth is "most likely to occur where there is a higher proportion of women in senior management teams." He pointed out that "this is not just a numbers game. It is about the richness of the board as a whole," and went on to give a robust case for why women should be in senior roles. This case is as applicable to strategic decision-making as it is to any other, yet in the UK it seems to be ignored even at the most senior levels of the economy.

The Bank of England is a notoriously woman-lite zone – all of the Governors have been male, only one of the eleven current directors is a woman, and although there are two female executive directors, they are responsible for human resources and communications. The Bank of England is not unique in this respect – all seven of the German Bundesbank's directors are male, for instance.

In the UK women find it harder to start businesses, harder to get finance for them, harder to win public sector contracts and harder to survive

But in the United States 50 per cent of the Federal Reserve Board are women, and the boards of the Banque de France and the Russian Central Bank both have 27 per cent female membership. Then there's the World Bank, at the most senior levels of which women are present in numbers in financial and economic roles. The vice president overseeing the bank's operations in Africa, for instance, is responsible for expenditure of over $12 billion, mostly spent on project lending and grants. Africa now has huge numbers of women-run small businesses, as well as a growing tradition of female finance ministers.

What, then, is to be done in the UK? And what can Labour do to ensure that, when it returns to government, women are brought back from the sidelines to which they are being consigned?

To begin with, Labour needs to develop, through its policy review, an active, cohesive and vocal policy on women and the economy, and this needs to be voiced by senior men in the party as well as women. Women in the shadow cabinet should not be left to talk about 'women' whilst their male colleagues talk about 'families'. If women are key to economic growth they should be central to Labour's economic policy, and that should be a matter of pragmatism, not political correctness.

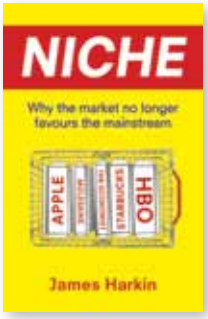
Secondly, Labour should challenge the diversity of the new structures at every opportunity. Local Labour MPs and council leaders should be asking questions, not just about what the new LEPs will do, but who they are, and there should be a clear statement of the need to reflect the contribution women make to the British economy. Labour should also look at how it can get more women into local leadership roles; the increased number of women in the shadow cabinet is very welcome, but the message needs to filter further down. Labour women need to lead on finance in local authorities, and there need to be more Labour women local authority leaders (there are currently just eight in England).

Integrating women into Labour's economic thinking will set the party clearly apart from the coalition, which not only attacks the interests of women, but also ignores what much of the rest of the world already sees as economic sense. Women belong at the heart of any plan for growth; it's up to Labour to put them there. ■

# The death of the mainstream

An unexpected effect of globalisation and the internet has been an increasingly targeted marketplace and consumers who value quality over quantity, singularity over mass-production. Labour's own 'niche' is its values, says **Ed Wallis**.

Ed Wallis
is Editorial Manager at the Fabian Society




Niche: Why the Market No Longer Favours the Mainstream
James Harkin

Little, Brown
£20

How much is enough? Whether accumulating votes, seeking profits or selling records, the late 20th century mandated a strict maxim: more is more. Indeed for social democrats, growth has been seen not only as desirable and potentially infinite, but as the answer to a difficult political challenge: how to divide the cake more equally. Simply bake a bigger cake and everyone's slice gets bigger.

For big business, 'maximisation' has been the name of the game: cut costs to the quick and shift workforces overseas to increase profit margins; and pitch products firmly in the middle of road to appeal to the widest possible consumer base. But bubbles burst, as we've seen over the last few years; there's no such thing as 'too big to fail'. Now a different model is also proving successful – 'optimisation' – where businesses take into account questions of sustainability and social justice, and deliver healthy profits without necessarily seeking to be the biggest or deliver maximum feasible dividends to shareholders. Enough is enough.

The music industry has been battling these challenges for a long time now, ever since the internet put a match to the comfortable business model music companies had used for most of the last century and made content freely available online. The giants of the industry were fatally slow to adapt to this radically different market place. But smaller, independent labels have been quietly on an upward trajectory by focussing on quality of music and product, and treating people as fans rather than consumers.

The pervasiveness of these trends becomes apparent reading James Harkin's fascinating *Niche*. Through a series of vignettes about the rise and fall of the "big beasts" of mass-market capitalism – Gap, Woolworths, General Motors – he charts the death of the mainstream, "in which anyone who tries to be all things to everyone ends up as nothing to anyone". It's a frightening and liberating new world out there: to survive you need to "narrow your focus to make sure you have something that people can't easily find anywhere else."

Take coffee for example. Harkin tells the story of Maxwell House, once the dominant player in the domestic American coffee market. The coffee was always a blend of two types of bean, one better tasting but difficult to grow and hence more expensive, one more bitter but resilient and thus cheaper. Slowly but surely, the Maxwell House blend shaved margins by increasing the proportion of the cheaper bean. By 2007 this race to the bottom was complete and Maxwell House was purely made up of the inferior tasting coffee. Consumers voted with their feet, heading to new coffee houses like Starbucks, where you'd pay more money but drink coffee that actually tasted nice, and in pleasant surroundings to boot. More and more it's investment in quality and creativity that pays dividends, rather than aiming for the lowest common denominator. The US cable TV network HBO doubled their programme development budget, gave writers full creative control – and redefined the way we watch television whilst their profits went through the roof.

The role of the internet in driving these changes cannot be overstated. Not only has it allowed us to become incredibly skilled in finding the things we want – "information predators" Harkin calls us – but it allows us to find each other and band together in groups of like-minded individuals. As our economic and political life fragments, people make sense of it by developing subcultures online.

This also has more worrisome implications, as one study reported in *Niche* shows: in the 1976 presidential election 26.8 per cent of people lived in "landslide counties" where the winning candidate won by over 20 percentage

points; by 2004 it was 48.3 per cent. We have less truck with those who don't agree with us and are even prepared to move house to avoid them.

Strategists have attempted to capitalise on this by targeting ever-smaller demographic groups. The apotheosis came in 2008, when the guru of political 'micro-targeting' Mark Penn presented Hillary Clinton as the ultimate mainstream candidate, slicing and dicing the electorate and making each small group a distinctive offer. Barack Obama's campaign tried something else, famously using the internet to put supporters in touch with each other and allowing them to build their own network of enthusiasm around the candidate. The campaign had a distinct message that supporters passed around of their own accord. "Instead of heading for the middle ground or going after groups of voters one at a time, Obama's team won by cultivating a modest but energetic clump of enthusiasts," says Harkin.

The internet has changed the way we think and act, responsible for levelling some of our most iconic brands. There's no guarantee it won't do the same for our political parties. To gain a hearing in this topsy turvy world, Harkin suggests you must "grow a place of your own". There are surely lessons in this for the Labour Party at a time of renewal.

New Labour's big tent left it short of proselytisers, and the party started to fall into the same trap as the big beasts of the market place: becoming all things to everyone but nothing to anyone. It had wide, mainstream appeal, but the 2010 election saw the party stranded in the middle of the road. It was New Labour's strategy to define itself against the party's own supporters, which worked well at the time to prove to a sceptical electorate that the party had changed. But even the recent past is an increasingly foreign country; Labour's challenge is different now. There are diminishing returns for the 'catch-all party' that tries to hoover up votes in the centre-ground, a strategy which has made it hard to cut through the popular chorus of 'politicians are all the same'. To do so Labour needs to find its niche. There is now a hard-headed and calculating rationale for re-engaging with values and giving people something to believe in. ■

# FABIAN QUIZ


'We are more alike than we are unalike. But the way we are unalike matters. To be male in Saudi Arabia, Jewish in Israel or white in Europe confers certain powers and privileges that those with other identities do not have. In other words identity can represent a material fact in itself.' Gary Younge demonstrates, in his urgent and brilliantly illuminating book Who Are We – And Should It Matter in the 21st Century?, a surprising and enlightening exposition of the constitutive aspects of our identity, producing a devastating critique of the way our society really works.

Penguin has kindly given us five copies of the new edition of this book to give away – to win one, answer the following question:

*Of the 23 members of the coalition cabinet, 22 are white. How many are millionaires?*

Please email your answers and your address to review@fabian-society.org.uk or send a postcard to: Fabian Society, Fabian Quiz, 11 Dartmouth Street, London. SW1H 9BN. Answers must be received no later than Friday 8 July 2011

# Listings

## A note from Local Societies Officer, Deborah Stoate

The Eastern Regional Conference in March had entertaining and informative speakers and was relatively well attended. But it was also interesting in other ways. Many of the attendees were former Labour Party members who had resigned for various reasons and had since rejoined and realised that the Fabian Society was the best place to go for political debate. This is being replicated in local societies throughout Britain – Fabian meetings are bristling with re-joined party members.

The other very good thing about the day was the formation of a new Cambridge Fabian Society. Cambridge University Fabian Society was originally formed in 1900 with 9 members, and it exemplifies the ebb and flow of local societies. In 1902 its membership had increased to 10. The Annual Report of 1904 notes sadly that the Cambridge Society "seems to be in somewhat low water, though it has held some meetings", but things picked up: by 1907 its membership was 48. The peak of its success was in 1911 when it had 100 members, 136 associates "held large public meetings and acquired clubrooms". I'm afraid to say that it was then downhill all the way, until it had disappeared in 1915.

So congratulations to the 2011 Cambridge members for their enthusiasm in starting a society and good luck. You have 'large public meetings' and your own clubroom to aspire to!

### BEXLEY
Regular meetings. **Contact Alan Scutt on 0208 304 0413 or alan.scutt@phonecoop.coop**

### BIRMINGHAM
All meetings at 7.00 in the Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham. **Details from Claire Spencer on virginiaisawitch@gmail.com**

### BOURNEMOUTH & DISTRICT
**25 March.** Lord Knight of Weymouth
All meetings at The Friends Meeting House, Wharncliffe Rd, Boscombe, Bournemouth at 7.30.
**Contact Ian Taylor on 01202 396634 for details or taylori@bpc.ac.uk**

### BRADFORD
New Group forming. If anyone is interested in joining, **please contact Celia Waller on celiawaller@blueyonder.co.uk**

### BRIGHTON & HOVE
**25 March.** Cllr Gill Mitchell, Shadow Leader of Brighton and Hove City Council on. 'Local Government Campaign'. 8.00
**Details of all meetings from Maire McQueeney on 01273 607910 email mairemcqueeney@waitrose.com**

### BRISTOL
New Society formed. **Contact Ges Rosenberg for details on cgrosenberg@tiscali.com**

### CANTERBURY
**Please contact Ian Leslie on 01227 265570 or 07973 681 451 or email i.leslie@btinternet.com**

### CARDIFF AND THE VALE
**Details of all meetings from Jonathan Wynne Evans on 02920 594 065 or wynneevans@phonecoop.coop**

### CENTRAL LONDON
**16 March.** Katherine Birbalsingh on 'Free Schools'
**20 April.** AGM at 7.30 – a chance to air your views.
Regular meetings at 7.30 in the Cole Room, 11 Dartmouth Street, London SW1A 9BN. **Details from Ian Leslie on 01227 265570 or 07973 681451**

### CHISWICK & WEST LONDON
**31 March.** Duncan Bowie on 'Planning for Housing in London – Past, Present and Future'
**Details from Monty Bogard on 0208 994 1780, email mb014fl362@blueyonder.co.uk**

### COLCHESTER
**Details from John Wood on 01206 212100 or woodj@madasafish.com Or 01206 212100**

### DARTFORD & GRAVESHAM
Regular meetings at 8.00 in the Ship, Green Street Green Rd at 8.00.
**Details from Deborah Stoate on 0207 227 4904 email debstoate@hotmail.com**

### DERBY
Regular monthly meetings.
**Details from Rosemary Key on 01332 573169**

### DONCASTER AND DISTRICT
New Society forming, **for details and information contact Kevin Rodgers on 07962 019168 email k.t.rodgers@gmail.com**

### EAST LOTHIAN
**24 March.** 'The AV Vote – Yes or No?' Debate between Cllr Andrew Burns and Tom Harris MP. 7.30 Prestonpans Labour Club, Kirk Street, Prestonpans. Preceded by AGM at 7.00
**Details of this and all other meetings from Noel Foy on 01620 824386 email noelfoy@lewisk3.plus.com**

### FINCHLEY
**Enquiries to Mike Walsh on 07980 602122**

### GLASGOW
Now holding regular meetings. **Contact Martin Hutchinson on mail@liathach.net**

### GLOUCESTER
Regular meetings at TGWU, 1 Pullman Court, Great Western Rd, Gloucester. **Details from Roy Ansley on 01452 713094 email roybrendachd@yahoo.co.uk**

### GREENWICH
New Society forming. If you are interested in becoming a member of this local Society, **please contact Chris Kirby on ccakirby@hotmail.co.uk**

### GRIMSBY
Regular meetings. **Details from Maureen Freeman on m.freeman871@btinternet.com**

### HARROW
**22 March.** Lawrie Nerva on 'Aneurin Bevan and the NHS'. 7.45 at 53 Sherington Ave, Hatch End
**Details from June Solomon on 0208 428 2623.** Fabians from other areas where there are no local Fabian Societies are very welcome to join us.

### HAVERING
**6 April.** Val Shawcross of the GLA on 'Transport Issues in Greater London'
**Details of all meetings from David Marshall email david.c.marshall.t21@btinternet.com tel 01708 441189**

### HERTFORDSHIRE
Regular meetings. **Details from Robin Cherney at RCher24@aol.com**

### HORNSEY AND WOOD GREEN
Inaugural meeting of Hornsey and Wood Green Local Fabian Society. Thursday 7 April, 7.00pm at 28 Middle Lane, Crouch End, N8 8PL
**Contact David Chaplin – chaplind@gmail.com**

### ISLINGTON
**For details of all meetings contact Conor McGinn on mcginn@gmail.com**

### LEEDS
New Society forming. If you would like to become a member of this new Local Society, **please contact Bryony King on bryonyvictoriaking@hotmail.co.uk**

### LEICESTER
New Society forming. **Please contact Annie Moelwyn-Hughes on anniemh@tiscali.co.uk**

### MANCHESTER
**Details from Graham Whitham on 079176 44435 email manchesterfabians@googlemail.com and a blog at http://gtrmancfabians.blogspot.com**

### MARCHES
New Society formed in Shrewsbury area. **Details on www.MarchesFabians.org.uk or contact Kay Thornton on Secretary@marchesfabians.org.uk**

### MIDDLESBOROUGH
New Society hoping to get established. **Please contact Andrew Maloney on 07757 952784 or email andrewmaloney@hotmail.co.uk for details**

### NEWHAM
**For details of this and all other meetings Ellie Robinson on marieellie@aol.com**

### NORTHUMBRIA AREA
**For details and booking contact Pat Hobson at pat.hobson@hotmail.com**

### NORTHAMPTON AREA
New Society forming. If you are interested in becoming a member of this new society, **please contact Dave Brede on davidbrede@yahoo.com**

NORWICH
Anyone interested in helping to re-form Norwich Fabian Society, **please contact Andreas Paterson andreas@headswitch.co.uk**

PETERBOROUGH
**25 March.** Lord Desai on 'The Disadvantaged – Must They Fail?' Meetings at 8.00 at the Ramada Hotel, Thorpe Meadows, Peterborough.
**Details from Brian Keegan on 01733 265769, email brian@briankeegan.demon.co.uk**

PORTSMOUTH
**Regular monthly meetings, details from June Clarkson on 02392 874293 email jclarkson1006@hotmail.com**

READING & DISTRICT
**24 March.** Debate on AV with speakers from Labour Yes and No campaigns
**For details of all meetings, contact Tony Skuse on 0118 978 5829 email tony@skuse.net**

SHEFFIELD
**Details and information from Rob Murray on 0114 255 8341or email robertljmurray@hotmail.com**

SOUTH EAST LONDON
**30 March.** Barry Gardiner MP on 'How Sustainable is the Labour Party?'
**Regular meetings; contact Duncan Bowie on 020 8693 2709 or email duncanbowie@yahoo.co.uk**

SOUTHAMPTON AREA
**For details of venues and all meetings, contact Eliot Horn at eliot.horn@btinternet.com**

SOUTH TYNESIDE
For information about this Society **please contact Paul Freeman on 0191 5367 633 or at freemanpsmb@blueyonder.co.uk**

SUFFOLK
**9 June.** Jessica Asato on'New Labour's Legacy'
Regular monthly meetings, **details from John Cook on 01473 255131, email contact@ipswich-labour.org.uk**

SURREY
Regular meetings at Guildford Cathedral Education Centre.
**Details from Maureen Swage on 01252 733481 or maureen.swage@btinternet.com**

TONBRIDGE AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS
**8 April.** Bill Kerry of the Equality Trust on @Equality and the Work of the Trust'
**13 May.** Adrian Prandle, Chair of Young Fabians on 'An Education Policy for All'
**For details of this and other meetings contact John Champneys on 01892 523429**

TYNEMOUTH
Monthly supper meetings, **details from Brian Flood on 0191 258 3949**

WARWICKSHIRE
New Society forming. **Details from Ben Ferrett on ben_ferrett@hotmail.com**

WEST DURHAM
The West Durham Fabian Society welcomes new members from all areas of the North East not served by other Fabian Societies. It has a regular programme of speakers from the public, community and voluntary sectors. It meets normally on the last Saturday of alternate months at the Joiners Arms, Hunwick between 12.15 and 2.00pm – light lunch £2.00
**Contact the Secretary Cllr Professor Alan Townsend, 62A Low Willington, Crook, Durham DL15 OBG, tel, 01388 746479 email alan.townsend@wearvalley.gov.uk**

WEST YORKSHIRE
**Details from Jo Coles on Jocoles@yahoo.com**

WIMBLEDON
New Society forming. **Please contact Andy Ray on 07944 545161or andyray@blueyonder.co.uk if you are interested.**

WIRRAL
If anyone is interested in helping to form a new Local Society in the Wirral area, **please contact Alan Milne at alan@milne280864.fsnet.co.uk or 0151 632 6283**

YORK
Regular meetings on 3rd or 4th Fridays at 7.45 at Jacob's Well, Off Miklegate, York.
**Details from Steve Burton on steve.burton688@mod.uk**

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

SOUTH WESTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE
**Saturday 11June**. 'Next Left – Creating an Alternative' Tudor Grange Hotel, Bournemouth. Details tba.
**Contact Deborah Stoate on 0207 227 4904 or debstoate@hotmail.com**

## FABIAN FORTUNE FUND

**WINNERS:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mick Cornish | £100 |
| Neil Dolby | £100 |

Half the income from the Fabian Fortune Fund goes to support our research programme. Forms available from Giles Wright, giles.wright@fabian-society.org.uk

## GENERAL SECRETARY

Sunder Katwala is standing down as General Secretary after seven and a half years in the post. The Fabian Society thanks Sunder for all of his work in the role and wishes him every success in his new venture. The Society is currently recruiting for the role. Please see www.fabians.org.uk for details of how to apply.

## FABIAN WOMEN'S NETWORK




It's been an active few months for the Fabian Women's Network. We were out in force at the Labour Movement's International Women's Day event in London on 5th March 2011. The event was the biggest event for women in the history of our Labour movement and was coordinated by a network of women from the Fabian Women's Network, Labour Party, Labour Women's Network (FWN), Lead4women, Co-operative movement and trade unions. Keynote speakers included Leader of the Labour Party Ed Miliband (the only man allowed!), Harriet Harman MP, Emily Thornberry MP and Kate Green MP, with a great contribution from London Assembly member Jennette Arnold. The event was a chance to learn more about the history of women in the Labour movement, ask questions, contribute ideas and meet like minded women from across the country.

We also launched the new FWN mentoring scheme which is open to Fabian women of all ages interested in moving forward in political or public life (see our website for more details) and our new Women Changing Politics t-shirts and mugs. These are still available for purchase at £9.99 for T-shirts and £5 for a mug.

Fabian women were also out in force on the TUC march – where we marched in the women's section with thousands of women from across the country. For more information about the FWN or to be added to our mailing list, visit our website www.fabianwomen.co.uk or email us at fabianwomen@fabian-society.org.uk.

# Usdaw is campaigning to win a better deal for the more than 226,000 women we represent

## Women in Usdaw

**are being hit hard by cuts in benefits, tax credits and public services**

### We are campaigning to:

- Safeguard Child Benefit.
- Raise awareness of and extend the Right to Request Flexible Working.
- Protect women whose state pension age has already been increased.


**Usdaw**
**188 Wilmslow Road**
**Manchester**
**M14 6LJ**

*calls charged at local rate


Visit our website for some great campaign ideas and resources:
**www.usdaw.org.uk/campaigns**

To join visit: www.usdaw.org.uk
or call: **0845 60 60 640***

Usdaw
Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers

**General Secretary:** John Hannett
**President:** Jeff Broome